MARIA CLARKE

HEALING YOUR WOUNDED INNER CHILD

A CBT Workbook to Overcome Past Trauma, Face Abandonment and Regain Emotional Stability.

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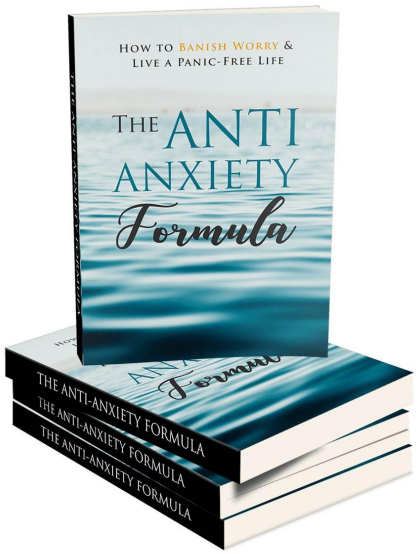

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Introduction

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So much of the healing of our world begins in healing the inner child who rarely, if ever, got to come out and play. –Vince Gowmon

There are those who have come out of their childhood with only positive memories and experiences, but not everyone can claim that same fortune. When you look back on your childhood, you may have memories that are shrouded in pain, anger, fear, anxiety, or a feeling of unfulfillment. Oftentimes, it is easier to push these memories to the back of your mind rather than deal with the trauma they caused.

By submerging these feelings and not allowing yourself to acknowledge the damage they did to your emotional or mental state, you are stunting your ability to grow as a healthy adult. These emotions you have held inside since childhood can climb to the surface, distress your relationships, and affect your mental and physical health.

When someone has lived through a traumatic childhood and is harboring a wounded inner child, they often exhibit odd behaviors or are withdrawn, yet they don't know why. Identifying the signs that you have a wounded inner child is the beginning of your journey to healing.

No parent expects their child to go through trauma, but the truth is, more than two-thirds of children have reported at least one traumatic event by the age of 16, and one in seven children suffered some type of childhood trauma in 2019 alone, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA, 2022). This number may be considerably higher since many adults do not acknowledge their past experiences as something that wounded their inner child.

Every child should feel protected, safe, and loved, but not all children have this security. Many parents protect their children from the physical dangers of this world with unwavering resolve and provide all essentials for living. However, providing a space for a child also means supporting them on an emotional and psychological level as well.

When children do not feel safe, they sense an impending danger that lasts throughout their lives and leaves a displaced void in their psyche. As an

adult, this is often a repressed pain that profoundly impacts how we see ourselves and distorts the relationships we have with others.

Hiding in the shadow of pain doesn't make it wither away, but as a child, that is often the only tool we are taught. As we hide in pain, moving forward as though we live the story of all others, we do not leave that pain behind, but bring it with us into adulthood like the heavy baggage that it is.

You may not think you deserve the right to go back and question the methods of your past and the adults who put a relentless weight on you, but if you look at your adolescent neighbor, a niece or nephew, or perhaps your child folded comfortably on your lap, you would expect them to have that right. When you were that age, nothing was different except that you didn't have the support you needed.

We all carry with us an inner child who never goes away. Swiss psychologist and psychoanalyst Carl Jung said, "In every adult, there lurks a child—an eternal child, something that is always becoming, is never completed, and calls for unceasing care, attention, and education. That is part of the personality which wants to develop and become whole" (LibQuotes, n.d.). Your inner child may be the representation of your younger self or a fondness for the struggles and triumphs you overcame as your life spanned from adolescence to adulthood.

The inner child, for many people, is a happy and playful piece of themselves that they fondly recall from time to time—or all the time, if one is lucky enough to be that carefree. But for many of us, our inner child plays alone, and recollections of childhood memories only remind us of the heartache and trauma we were ill-equipped to deal with and still are to this day.

If you experienced trauma, neglect, or emotional pain that was too complicated for you to deal with when you were younger, your inner child is likely vulnerable and crouched in the corner waiting for someone to lead them to the light. Even though the pain of childhood devastated you and still does, you may feel that a rugged outer appearance is the only thing that is protecting you and your inner child from further pain.

Though we may tend to think that shutting everyone out will help protect us. In reality, it only leads to further seclusion and a lack of the compassion and love that we crave. Healing yourself from childhood trauma takes time, but it can be done. You only need to begin. Healing the child within will let them know you can take over and help protect them now.

As a professor of psychology, I've studied the concept of the inner child in textbooks and have written a book about dialectical behavior therapy. In addition to my education, I also delved into my personal experience of a difficult childhood to connect with this topic.

I grew up in a family that lacked boundaries, and I was raised by strict parents who made me responsible for raising my siblings. I didn't get to experience childhood. Instead, I had to be mindful of everyone else and was not allowed to emote feelings of sadness or discontent with the role my parents decided to give me. I had to acknowledge, after years of struggling with my mental health, that I had grown up feeling repressed and unhappy.

Not everyone who has a wounded inner child considers their childhood overtly traumatizing, and many consider themselves lucky to have wonderful parents and come from a solid background. It is easy for most people to attribute early childhood experiences to whom they have become but be unable to identify any substantial events that could trigger negative events in present relationships. To identify what we might have missed in our childhood, whether it be attention or compassion, we need to divert from the narrative of good and bad and delve into what our past circumstances might have lent to what we feel was missing. You may not even realize you have a wounded inner child until you react to a relatively benign situation in a catastrophic way. The inability to respond to an adult situation appropriately may be your sign to look deeper into your past.

Before you begin a journey of healing, you need to acknowledge your inner child and get to know them by exploring your relationship. It isn't easy to identify your childhood as a traumatic one, but the only way to begin healing is to examine the past. Often, it is difficult to acknowledge a wounded inner child, but it can also come as a surprise to find out that you have one to begin with.

You may wonder

- If I didn’t have a super traumatic childhood, why is it important for me to work on my wounded inner child?

  Working on your inner child isn’t about hating your family or placing blame but to identify any needs from your childhood that weren’t fulfilled or pain that was inflicted upon you that has yet to heal. Inner child work is about finding the places in your life that need extra attending and then allowing yourself to respond. There is nothing in inner child work that demands you distance from or put blame on family or others from your childhood.

  Inner child work empowers people to act as their own parent. It allows you to give yourself what you need moving forward to ensure that any past neglect or pain is tended.

- What is the importance of identifying whether you had a traumatic childhood?

  There may be certain aspects of your life that have never connected the way they should, when everything aligns but a problem remains unresolved or you are unable to find happiness despite truly believing you have it all. When there are unresolved issues in your life that don’t match your intentions or efforts, you need to determine if this is from childhood trauma. Issues can include

  - difficulty communicating with others
  - having a hard time maintaining social and intimate relationships
  - not understanding why your words or actions offend or hurt others
  - feeling out of place, even within your own family
  - being seen by others in a way very different from the way you perceive yourself

- How do you actually know if you need to work on your wounded inner child?

If you are reading this book, you have had something happen to you that feels irreparable, or you know someone who has. You are traumatized by events that occurred in childhood and react to adult situations in a childlike manner. A wounded inner child presents differently for everyone, but for you, it may look like the following:

- You subconsciously sabotage relationships.
- You tend to attract toxic relationships.
- You expect the worst from everyone.
- You have difficulty saying “no” to people.
- You cannot do anything right in any scenario.

If any of these sound like you, there is a wounded inner child who needs attention. Healing your wounded inner child can begin now that you are ready to acknowledge them and begin the healing.

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Chapter 1

Meeting
Your Inner Child

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Whether you have yet to acknowledge it or have always held their hand, you have an inner child who has shadowed or walked alongside you throughout your life.

Your inner child is a part of you throughout your entire life. They develop your personality and direct how you treat and react to others. It is the part of you that knows all your feelings, memories, desires, moods, and attitudes you have toward yourself. It is also a part of who you become as an adult based on how you were treated and the confidence and advantages you were given growing up.

Your inner child is the one who remembers the tune of a song but perhaps not the words and overcomes you with a feeling of warmth. Perhaps an aroma pierces your senses and allows you to visualize a much younger you cuddled on your father's lap on a chilly fall evening, or you reminisce about a warm summer evening with echoes of laughter. But not all memories of the inner child are welcomed.

Some people have an inner child who suffered at the hands of those who should have protected them, who neglected them when they should have showered them with praise, or who spoke words that their developing minds couldn't understand but felt the pain of just the same.

During childhood, people develop whom they will become, for better or worse, and navigate how to treat others and respond to various situations. For whatever reason, you may not have acknowledged your inner child; therefore, you may still carry the malformations of the past and the struggles and insecurities that come with it. If you break a bone, you do not leave it splintered. You go to the hospital and have it set. The same should be done with the fragments of your younger self that were never healed but need the proper attention to function in a healthy manner.

Some may not want to acknowledge their inner child, believing it to be a foolish ideology, but this is entirely untrue. Some people may be open to

discovering their inner child, but not everyone believes they need to pay special attention to it. This regard could be due to an emotionally healthy childhood or having set the inner child aside for so long they feel a sense of normalcy. Take time to reflect on whether or not you need to give yourself the attention you always deserved by allowing yourself to revisit the vulnerable space you were in as a child.

Signs You Have a Wounded Inner Child

If you have always felt displaced but are not sure why, there could be unhealed wounds and deep-seated issues you are not aware of. To determine the mental state of your inner child, ask yourself the following questions:

- Did you feel safe as a child?
- Were you given freedom to express yourself?
- Did you feel you had a place within your family?
- Do you feel resentment toward people or instances from your childhood?
- How do you treat your inner child today?

Acknowledging and healing a part of you that has been broken or missing since childhood is a brave and important step in the emotional and mental healing you will go through now.

Your inner child not only lives inside your mind, but it is a part of your entire identity, inbred in your psyche. Staying connected to this part of yourself is what allows you to feel excited about upcoming events, drives you toward your goals and dreams, and determines how you feel toward others' success as well.

Connecting to the needs of your inner child that were not tended will help you overcome any emotional and developmental stunting you experienced because your psychological needs were not satisfied while your mind was developing. The insecurities you had as a child, along with the trauma you

may have endured, carry on throughout your life because you are the child that you carry within you.

The child does not simply disappear as you age, just as your childhood isn't erased as you grow older. Sure, it may be more difficult to recall specific details from your early memories, but they are still there, living in the same mind you have today. You may have grown, and your experiences may be different now, but everything is connected to whom you were from the moment you were born.

What Does a Wounded Inner Child Look Like?

The wounded inner child carries the psychological imprint of your childhood traumas, the part of you that wasn't able to deal with what you endured when you were young. The part of yourself that was never heard and never healed is what you carry as part of your wounded past and the part of yourself that now acts as a protector by guarding the hurt part of you.

Several traumatic events or actions may have occurred to make your inner child need protection from yourself today, things that still make you feel vulnerable and unable to face these circumstances of your past. Life-altering events that cause extreme trauma may include

- loss of someone close to you, such as a parent, especially as a result of violent death
- losing your home to fire or poverty
- living through war or migrating to a new country
- going through a natural disaster like an earthquake or hurricane

Some recurring and equally psychologically damaging events can happen repeatedly throughout your life and leaves you traumatized, like

- emotional neglect from a parent
- stepping in as a caregiver when you were a child yourself
- dealing with the cruelty and ridicule of being a minority or having a physical disability

- being bullied for being different, like the way you dress or because you don’t conform to societal standards
- dealing with prolonged neglect or rejection

People often feel they are not allowed to express their feelings when their distress does not meet extreme standards. You may feel your trauma isn’t that bad by comparison to others, but pain doesn’t have a limit. Just because someone else suffered the loss of a loved one doesn’t mean that you need to hold in the disappointment of losing a job, having to move to a city far away from your family, or any other personal losses or disruptions. Your pain is as valid as anyone else’s and should not be compared.

All of these can lead to an inability to have meaningful relationships with others. The feelings of being discarded or mocked can make it difficult to trust anyone, including friends. They may cause you to act with unwarranted negatively toward a friend or companion. This childhood neglect can also make you believe that poor treatment and half-truths are all you deserve, so that is what you accept or even look for in relationships.

The part of you, the child, that faced these painful situations wants to revisit these events, so you finally decide you can’t move forward without acknowledging and healing the child you tried to leave behind. However, the protective part of you wants to shelter you from the pain you once faced.

Sometimes the part of you that is protecting your inner child does so by avoiding relationships entirely or by fearing commitment or intimacy and may find that pushing people away is the best defense.

Without facing the past and the pain that was inflicted upon you, you will never move beyond that stage of your life and learn to trust and love enough to have truly meaningful relationships. You may also find that success comes more easily to someone who has torn up their past, studied it, and rebuilt it with heartache but also with less self-doubt.

How the Inner Child Manifests

The inner child can manifest in several ways. Once you become aware of these manifestations of emotions and behaviors, you can identify where they stem from and begin to heal.

Low Self-Esteem

Low self-esteem can have many causes that stem from early childhood traumas, including feeling like an outsider with peers or at home, dealing with illness, or having a negative outlook of yourself despite self-inflicted expectations.

This negative way of viewing yourself often results in self-deprivation and a lack of self-worth, which can lead you to believe you have no value and deserve all of the negative aspects of your life. Additionally, a negative view of yourself can perpetuate anxiety and depression and can create issues with body image that lead to eating disorders.

To readjust your continual self-doubt, you need to acknowledge the struggles your inner child had to face and pull those memories and feelings to the surface. Loving your inner child and validating their emotions and feelings by way of self-parenting is the only way to move forward with a healthier view of yourself.

You Bend Over Backward for Others

People with unresolved trauma may find that they vie for the approval of others and will do nearly anything for attention. They may also put up with a great deal of mistreatment from someone during the course of a relationship, only to have it ended by the other person. This could be because of the fear to disappoint others or cause frustration, validating your worth by someone else's approval.

The part of you that will do anything to please others has likely been with you since you were young. You likely felt the need to keep your thoughts, emotions, and opinions to yourself because you knew it would cause discomfort in your home.

Your Boundaries Are Severe or Non-Existent

Often, a wounded inner child will manifest in how you interact with others, such as placing severe boundaries on relationships or having a complete lack

of boundaries.

Many who suffer from a wounded inner child may not know how to set healthy boundaries with people. This can be evident by not being able to say “no” to others, even if it means you will be setting your own needs aside. This nagging persistence to please others may be due to not being able to set healthy boundaries with your parents as a child because you were afraid to disappoint them or make them mad.

It is not uncommon for parents to imply that by suppressing your own needs, you were being *good* by allowing your parents to set your needs aside. This can commonly arise in situations as an adult. You may feel that if you put your own needs first, others will be upset with you and dismiss you from their lives, even in intimate situations.

Alternatively, your boundaries may be rigid for self-preservation. This can result in distancing yourself from others who have offended you or hurt your feelings or cutting them out of your life entirely. There is no negotiation for resolution, and you move on without them.

You Withhold Emotions

Shame has no place in a child’s life, yet many parents tell their children that expressing themselves in a moment of sadness or weakness is something to hide. As an adult, you may still hold that feeling, that expressing how you feel is a sign of weakness and something to be ashamed of.

There is no honor in shaming a child; it instills negative emotions and feelings of inadequacy, regret, or being unworthy of love. This can lead to severe emotions that manifest by way of treating others with disregard and bullying them to manifest the same emotion of *weakness* in them.

When a child is not allowed to feel their emotions without some placement of guilt or ridicule, they carry the feeling of shame that should be carried in a handbag by the adult in the situation, because they have been conditioned to feel they are the one who is *wrong* or *bad*. When a child acts out, this is often a sign they are repressed at home and unable to release feelings of pain in a safe, healthy, and completely normal way with a nurturing parent.

Fear of Abandonment

Particularly if you experienced neglect or indifference shown to you as a child, you can have a fear of abandonment in adulthood that manifests by way of being insecure, clingy, and codependent in relationships.

Fear of being abandoned is one of the most damaging and common fears when you have had a traumatic childhood. It can give you a sense of insecurity in all relationships and you may act in an unhealthy or possessive way.

Trust Issues

Distrust is a common defense mechanism to avoid dealing with emotional pain, fears, disappointment, and anxiety. It often begins during childhood in someone who learned early on that they couldn't trust people, usually from an adult betraying their trust.

If you are already insecure about your abilities or your worth, trust issues become complicated. If you were gaslighted, made to feel worthless, neglected, or emotionally abused when you were young, building a sense of self is difficult and believing in your worth is even harder.

Being told you did not live up to your potential or you should have known better, would have seeded deep doubt and shame in your adolescent mind. It is difficult to trust others when you are carrying that psychological damage around.

Avoidance of Others

Many people who are described as introverts have a wounded inner child. You may avoid large social gatherings and only begrudgingly attend smaller get-togethers out of obligation. Perhaps you even get meals and groceries delivered to your house because being in public makes you feel overwhelmed. This is all common for someone who was not made to feel secure as a child.

Prone to Addiction

If you have easily fallen into an addiction of any kind, such as smoking, drinking, gambling, or other obsessive traits, it could be due to your childhood and the trauma you went through.

Addiction can be a symptom of an underlying and unresolved issue. Rather than dealing with the traumas and reliving the pain of them, you might block out what actually happened and welcome the rush of adrenaline as you overindulge.

Wounded Inner Child Archetypes

An archetype, as defined in Webster's Dictionary, is “the original pattern or model of which all things of the same type are representations or copies: PROTOTYPE” (Mirriam-Webster, n.d.). In simpler terms, it is a common representative of a specific person or thing. An example would be, “The movie was a good archetype of the horror genre.”

In psychology, an archetype is defined as “an inherited idea or mode of thought in the psychology of Carl Gustav Jung that is derived from the experience of the race and is present in the unconscious of an individual” (Mirriam-Webster, n.d.).

According to Dr. Jung, the wounded child is one of the many child archetypes. Many believe that all people have all sub-archetypes to a degree and claim such things as all children have enjoyed magic or fantasy, not wanting to grow up, feeling left out, or fearing the dark.

The wounded child archetype is much greater in some people than in others and can be identified by the following characteristics:

- The person’s behavior and characteristics can manifest in various patterns.
- The person can exhibit a fear of change and find comfort and reassurance in stability because they feel they are in control, which is something they never had in childhood.
- They likely have low self-esteem and feel worthless because they were undervalued in their formative years.
- They often feel their actions and words are misinterpreted or misunderstood by others, especially by those who have not gone through similar traumas in childhood and cannot relate.

- They are likely to suffer from clinical depression, anxiety, social phobias, and other psychological disorders.
- These people may find it near impossible to let go of emotional pain, both from their traumatic childhood and any new negative encounters they face as an adult.
- They can suffer from several pain disorders like fibromyalgia.

The above characteristics allow the wounded inner child to have empathy for others who may be going through a difficult time. They tend to feel drawn or closer to people who have had similar traumas in their own childhood and often try to help heal others, even before they learn to deal with their own feelings.

Often, those who have gone through difficult childhoods and have emotional and psychological issues, go through what is known as cognitive behavioral therapy to help determine the root cause of disruptive thought patterns and behaviors.

If you have a wounded inner child, it is easy to get caught up in a story of hopelessness, suffering, and gloom. There may be a constant theme of failure, rejection, feelings of worthlessness, and fear in the archetype of the wounded inner child. The wounded child likely feels misunderstood, unloved, abandoned, neglected, and forgotten, so much so that they forget to care for themselves.

Every Inner Child Is Unique

Your inner child has unique wounds to be addressed, and the process of healing your inner child will be different from anyone else's since your home, the people you were raised by, and your circumstances were something only you experienced. Even someone who grew up with siblings can have a very different childhood or respond to situations differently because everyone's interpretation of experiences is different.

There are several wounded child archetypes. You may present one or more of the following:

- **The overachiever:** This archetype has a sense of value and acknowledgment through its success. They use validation from others as a coping mechanism for low self-esteem and self-worth, and they will only feel loved through their achievements.
- **The underachiever:** They keep to themselves and are often afraid to fulfill their potential for fear of being criticized or shamed for any potential failures. This archetype is afraid to become emotionally involved with others for fear of rejection, so they often avoid trying. They feel the safest hiding, as a wallflower, for no one to see.
- **The caretaker:** They are usually products of a codependent upbringing and have a sense of purpose and identity by neglecting that they need to care for others. This archetype is under the delusion that they will only be loved if they validate and care for others while neglecting themselves and their own needs.
- **The protector:** As a way of healing personal vulnerabilities, usually in childhood, this archetype is relentless in their pursuit of helping and healing others. They see others as incapable, helpless, and dependent and feel loved and validated for being in control of someone else's safety and happiness. They think they will only be loved by helping solve the problems of others and focusing on their troubles.
- **Life of the party:** These are the ever-cheerful and happy people who mask their pain, vulnerabilities, and weakness in a shroud of jokes and laughter. This inner child archetype feels their emotional state is shameful and the way for them to be loved and accepted is through making those around them laugh and be happy.
- **Idol-worshiper:** This inner child believes that love toward them is received by dismissing their own needs and modeling their lives after someone they admire. This is likely from a child who was hurt by the caretaker they worshiped and perceived as flawless.
- **Yes-person:** This person will dismiss their own plans and needs on a dime to help out others. They were likely raised by someone who gave plenty of themselves to others and was engaged in a codependent

relationship or pattern. Their sense of self-value and feeling of being loved comes from being selfless and unflawed.

Inner child archetypes share the common theme that they are all products of neglected emotional needs and broken trust and connections. The roles they adopted were used as survival modes to survive in a difficult upbringing. The narrative of the wounded inner child archetype was assumed subconsciously to survive at the hand of neglectful or demanding role models or people. These narratives follow the inner child throughout their lives, and they adapt to other relationships in a similar pattern without thought or predetermined ideals.

Archetypes are not accepted willingly. You assign this persona to all relationships throughout your life. The way to break free of these archetypes and strive for the person you are deep inside is to acknowledge that your inner child deserves to be heard for whom they were born to be.

Until you acknowledge the child deep within yourself, the wounded archetypes will demand to be heard and will create unnecessary drama or manipulate you into reevaluating your worth. Unprocessed trauma spawns coping mechanisms to protect against additional suffering.

What Is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy?

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a well-known type of talk therapy whereby the affected person speaks to a therapist or psychotherapist over several well-structured sessions. Cognitive behavioral therapy helps form clarity of negative and skewed thinking so that unfavorable or challenging situations become clear and can be dealt with effectively by changing the way you respond.

CBT is especially useful for those who are struggling with mental health issues such as

- depression
- anxiety
- eating disorders

- phobias
- post-traumatic stress disorder

Unlike some talk therapy treatments, CBT helps deal with problems you are facing now. It helps you find useful and practical avenues to feel more positive about daily life by changing your outlook. Cognitive behavioral therapy helps you gain perspective on issues in your life that seem enormous and too difficult or massive to handle. Various techniques are used during CBT, such as

- coping skills
- stress management
- relaxation exercises
- learning how thoughts affect actions
- becoming more confident

Certain feelings, actions, and thoughts contribute to keeping you in a cycle of negativity or reliving situations that make you feel bad about yourself. CBT helps prevent the cycle of negative thoughts by dissecting what makes you feel anxious or frightened. When your problems are broken down, they can be managed more easily. This form of therapy helps you transform your negative pattern of thoughts into positive ones, changing how you feel. Unlike other therapies, CBT helps you deal with these issues over a specific number of sessions, not over several months or years like other talk therapies.

How CBT Can Help Heal a Wounded Inner Child

Trauma-informed cognitive behavioral therapy is focused on problem-solving skills that help change your physical and emotional reactions when you are confronted by something that triggers a childhood event. This therapy creates a safe place for anyone dealing with a wounded inner child with the hopes that they will feel safe enough to open up and begin healing.

The main goals of trauma-based cognitive behavioral therapy include

- reduced panic response

- increased trust and control
- effective and healthy responses to situations

The National Association of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapists says the benefits of CBT are, “Cognitive-behavioral therapy focuses on the idea that our thoughts cause our feelings and behaviors, not external things, like people, situations, and events. The benefit of this fact is that we can change the way we think to feel/act better even if the situation does not change” (Riopel, 2019).

The benefits of CBT in healing the wounded inner child can be

- anger management
- relapse avoidance
- chronic pain management
- dealing with negative emotions or thoughts
- dealing with sleep disorders
- building coping mechanisms for loss
- recovery from traumatic events
- dealing with relationships

With CBT, you are able to address and recognize what causes triggers and how and why destructive patterns become a part of your life. Once these negative aspects are addressed, you can replace the negative response with a positive reaction.

Connecting With Your Inner Child Worksheet

Several psychological modules describe the inner child as childlike, not childish. The essence of the inner child is that of being

- joyful
- sensitive
- curious

- playful
- innocent
- awe-inspired

Psychosynthesis, psychology of the self, calls the core of the child one's true self. This part of a person remains embedded in the subconsciousness of us all to make up our complete structure as a person. It is the part that craves attention, love, approval, acceptance, affirmation, and tending.

Answer the questions below to help you become more aware of and in tune with your wounded inner child by highlighting the behaviors you may be holding onto in your adult life, such as self-sabotage, dysfunctional behaviors, or attachment issues.

Ask yourself the following questions and answer honestly.

I frequently have trouble identifying my feelings.	yes/no
I find it difficult to express myself.	yes/no
I have trouble beginning things.	yes/no
I have difficulty following through with or competing things.	yes/no
I do not know who I really am.	yes/no
I often find my mind has wandered off and I'm daydreaming.	yes/no
I become anxious when I am in a new situation.	yes/no
I have trouble focusing on most tasks.	yes/no
I am fearful of the unknown and startle easily.	yes/no
I have difficulty saying "no" to people.	yes/no
I do not often go to social events on my own.	yes/no
I get nervous or afraid of going to new places.	yes/no

I feel horrible or guilty when I tell someone “no.”	yes/no
I can’t get rid of material objects. I hoard things.	yes/no
I do not feel that I am good enough.	yes/no
I am self-critical much of the time.	yes/no
I often wish I were someone else.	yes/no
I feel worthless.	yes/no
I am not a good person.	yes/no
I am an addict.	yes/no
I don’t fit in anywhere.	yes/no
I feel alone in a room filled with people.	yes/no
I have trouble letting go of situations, anger, and pain.	yes/no
I am a very compulsive person and make impulsive decisions.	yes/no
I am always angry, and my actions tend to be aggressive.	yes/no
I feel defensive most of the time.	yes/no
I tend to avoid events and people.	yes/no
I usually eat too little or binge eat.	yes/no
I do not trust others.	yes/no
I avoid conflict.	yes/no
I am always nervous.	yes/no
I am rebellious.	yes/no
I do not ask for help.	yes/no
I am unable to stand up for myself.	yes/no

I have no close friends.	yes/no
I find intimacy in relationships to be very difficult.	yes/no

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Chapter 2

Connecting With Your Inner Child

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Now that you have met your inner child, it is time to listen to what they went through growing up. Give them a chance to tell you what happened to them by listening to what they had to say when no one else would.

In order to get any child to trust you, a connection must be made. To fully form a responsive and true connection with your inner child, release your inhibitions before beginning this process. There is no room for self-judgment when you are initiating the healing process of a part of yourself that has been judged and made to feel inadequate since childhood.

You can participate in many activities, such as art therapy, that will help you revisit your inner child.

The Importance of Creativity in Healing

Art therapy is a distinct method that embodies forms of expression via visual art as a form of psychotherapy. An entire profession is dedicated to helping people regain control of their emotions and relieve anxiety, but the great news is that you can benefit from this therapy by doing it yourself. If you doodle when you are nervous or use drawing as a form of emotional expression, then you are already applying the basic principles of art therapy to help calm yourself.

Creative healing is crucial to healing your inner child. Many think this is because children are naturally creative and express themselves honestly without questioning themselves or their abilities. Being creative allows an adult to become reacquainted with their inner child again.

As you age, you begin to lose passion for the simpler things, or you fall under the impression you are too old for such things. There is no original rule book that says to take yourself seriously once you hit a certain age. That was all assumed and enforced by society and it is contributing to a world full of suppressed and repressed adults.

Somewhere between childhood, where anything is possible, and adulthood, where you feel stuck in life and have no time for fun, your innocence and

hope were lost. This can be especially true of those struggling with a wounded inner child, who never had the chance to experience a normal childhood. In an instant, your thoughts turn from what makes you happy to what society will think of your actions.

Over time, you stopped being yourself in front of others and only allowed your inner child to come out when nobody was watching. By the time your mid-teens came around, the inner child was repressed deep inside and neglected once again.

Reconnecting with your inner child will help you begin to heal from the trauma you endured. Let them know you still see them and accept them by engaging in art therapy and other childlike activities that will reignite that connection to innocence.

At some point during childhood, you lost sight of yourself and only looked through the eyes of others. Adults tend to develop an unhealthy obsession with having to be perfect, not to themselves, but to the perception of others. With art therapy, judgment and expectations need to be checked at the door so you can experience joy as you did before you realized others could judge you.

What to Expect Through Art Therapy

Therapy is done by someone who is trained and licensed in that specific field, just as a psychologist would be licensed. Art therapy combines the process of creating art with psychological aspects and the past experiences of the person to help address areas of concern like emotional anguish. As mentioned above, this is not something you need to do professionally or pay any money for at all, unless you decide to do so later on.

Just as putting emotions into music, people tend to spill what they are feeling into their doodles, drawings, or even through lines. Art is a quiet way of loudly declaring through brush strokes, colors, and images how we are feeling on the inside. Trained therapists can use these visualizations to determine how you are feeling.

Art, in any form, is a form of self-discovery. There are, in fact, several types of creative therapies, including

- drama
- dance
- music
- writing
- visual expression

The process of making art gives you a sense of control over your own actions and can restore a sense of confidence to help you regain control of your life. Creating art therapy can include an expression of

- drawing
- painting
- finger painting
- carving
- molding clay
- sculpting
- making a collage
- doodling

When you undergo art therapy, you may be surprised by the feelings that emerge. Having a registered therapist direct these sessions can give you a better understanding of how to deal with the surprising responses and emotions that arise.

From the art, you and your therapist can interpret and discuss the work and go into the colors, images, and even the people included in the art, or those left out, to determine if this has a deeper meaning.

This therapeutic healing technique can reveal emotions and thoughts that have been buried for years. With a combination of your inner feeling being

unveiled in your art and having a registered professional to help you talk through and acknowledge your pain, this can be a very effective form of therapy, especially for those who have unsuccessfully tried other forms of counseling.

Connecting to Your Inner Child

You may be open to finding and healing your inner child but not know where to begin. Here are some things you can do to connect in an organic way:

- **Maintain an open mind.** Like with any new relationship, it may take you a while to get used to hanging out with your inner child. Begin by recognizing that your inner child is not only a part of you but that it is you. This child has a wealth of knowledge that you may have forgotten, things that are filed so far back in your mind that you can no longer recall, but they can.

  You need not only to be able to laugh at the memories your inner child holds but also to dig deep into the recesses of your mind where dark memories are buried.

  Revisiting your childhood can be a mixture of negative and positive emotions and events. All of the events helped shape who you are and gave you the means to make choices and reach your potential as an adult.

- **Be open to what your inner child has to say.** Once you have made the decision to be open to meeting and getting to know your inner child, you need to listen without judgment to what they have to say. It is also imperative that you accept the feelings your inner child is expressing, no matter how difficult that may be.

  You may learn that your inner child feels

  - frustrated by ignored needs
  - insecure

- shamed or guilty
- vulnerable
- abandoned or rejected
- anxious

Try to connect these feelings of inadequacy or sadness to a specific event that occurred in your childhood. This may help you identify what similar situations trigger you as an adult. For example, if your partner needs to go to work on the weekend instead of staying home with you and spending time together, disappointment and frustration can erupt. Your feelings of rejection may present in a way similar to that of a child's tantrum.

If you look at your reaction to this adult situation, you may be able to find a time in your childhood—or many times—when your parents couldn't spend time with you, had to cancel a special outing because they had work obligations, or traveled for work and their time for you was sporadic.

This insight may help you understand why you are reacting a certain way toward your partner when they cancel plans, and it may help you open up more direct and effective forms of communication with them.

Hearing what your inner child is saying and how it is feeling will allow you to go through those emotions again without trying to push them deep down. Acknowledging your feelings and giving them a place in your life can help validate your experiences and the distress they caused you. It is also an important step toward accepting that you have some things to work through.

- **Study children.** There is much to be learned from watching your own children, the children of friends, or those of family members. Children are a great example of living in the moment and enjoying the slightest majesty in life. Find a memory from your childhood when you couldn't wait to be done with school or dinner so you could fall into

your own imagination and mold into a princess, superhero, or some other fantastical imagining.

If you can, play hide and seek, skip rope or play tag, and see if it brings back the simpler times in your life. Play allows a child to express themselves, but adults can feel the freedom of youthful expression if they allow themselves to. I often find that reading a story from my youth helps bring back a time when I was able to escape from my own discipline, if only temporarily.

- **Pull out old photos and reminisce.** Looking through old photos can help trigger childhood memories and emotions, some that you may have completely forgotten about. Talking to your parents or siblings and sharing old stories can help bring emotions to the surface that were buried deep down. While this may lead to some wonderful stories, it may also help you ascertain where some of your trauma comes from. Be prepared to deal with those feelings head-on.
- **Act like a child.** People often scoff at those with childlike qualities, but acting like a child now and again is essential to your mental health.

  If you were unable to enjoy your childhood because there was a lack of positive and fun experiences, you need to enjoy those aspects now. You might have missed out on getting ice cream on the beach or camping and roasting marshmallows by the fire as a kid, but you are still here and so is that child deep down.

  Enjoying carefree experiences such as jumping in mud puddles or playing in the rain will help you reconnect with a part of yourself that was missing. If you have children, sharing these moments with them will not only give them a sense of a complete childhood but will also restore one to you.
- **See a therapist.** Opening correspondence with your inner child can be a lot for anyone to handle on their own. Hiring a therapist can allow you to navigate your emotions in a safe place and can provide helpful tools for you to begin to heal your inner child.

Connecting with a therapist who deals with past trauma and the exploration of the inner child is crucial for your healing. Psychodynamically oriented psychotherapy can help you get insight into the problems you are facing today, but it evaluates patterns people tend to develop over time as well. To identify these patterns, the therapist will ask for details during therapy sessions about

  - thoughts
  - emotions
  - childhood experiences
  - beliefs

By noting these patterns, the therapist can examine ways you avoid confrontations or stress or develop defense mechanisms to protect yourself. Once these patterns are identified, it is easier to learn strategies to cope with these avoidance tactics and begin to face your problems.

- **Leave room for wonder.** Healing is a continual journey. By initiating a bond with your inner child, you are cultivating awareness for what this long-neglected child needs. You may also learn new details and wants that shouldn't be ignored.

Stay connected to the innocence of that child that never gave up wondering what it would be like to slay dragons or if they could climb a tree into the clouds. Reset your mind to be more open to speaking with your inner child on a regular basis. Be sure to listen when you feel a nudge of discontent and see what part of your past needs to be reconciled.

Allowing the relationship with your inner child to grow over the years and making them a part of who you are today will allow you to change and grow.

10 Questions to Awaken Your Inner Child

Maybe you have tried to stir your inner child in the past but have felt silly and decided it was better to return to adulting. Like most things, it takes time to get into the mindset of a child and to excite the wonder and adventure you used to feel before responsibility and time crunches took over your life.

If you have had a hard time finding that child who would run into the rain with an umbrella that would never be opened or the kid who went foraging to see how many beetles they could find, you may be going about it all wrong. No child is going to approach an adult who is sitting with their hands clasped and a sneer on their face. You have to pique the interest of the child within by reassuring them that you remember.

Here are some things to ask yourself to awaken your inner child:

- What did you want to be when you grew up?
- What was your favorite thing to do?
- What did you always wonder about when you were young?
- What were you prone to daydreaming about?
- What astonished you most as a child?
- What was your favorite thing to play with?
- What was your favorite subject in school?
- What was your favorite thing to make art with?
- When you are around children now, how do you feel?

Take the time to acknowledge what your inner child is saying without judgment or redirection. Connecting to your inner child means you are always open to listening, and you feel compelled to live your life the way that makes you feel free.

Connecting With Your Inner Child Worksheet

Now that you have connected to your inner child, staying in touch with your younger self is essential for proper healing. Take the time to enjoy

activities that brought you joy when you were a child or that you never had the opportunity to do because you never had a proper childhood.

Read each goal below and write notes on how you are honoring your inner child by participating in these goals.

- I was open with my inner child by…

(Listen to what your inner child has to say. What did they say today?)

- Observe your inner child. What did you learn from them?

(Write a letter to your inner child.)

- Speak openly with your inner child.

(Write in a journal using your inner child's voice.)

- Watch children for guidance.

(Look through childhood photos and other mementos. What memories did they bring back?)

- Do activities you enjoyed as a child. What were they?

(How did you live at the moment?)

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Chapter 3

Your Inner Child's Wounding

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To better understand your inner child and where the hurt comes from, it is helpful to gain perspective on the innate qualities of children. All children are born with certain common traits, but the potential or quality of these traits is reliant upon how they are nurtured, ignored, or manipulated.

These inherent traits were described by John Bradshaw, author, counselor, and public speaker, in the acronym, WONDERFUL, as defined below:

Wonder

Children live in a state of natural wonder because they live in each moment without expectation of what comes next but with excitement to see what does. As we age, we lose this sense of awe and fall from our state of constant surprise into a sense of responsibility.

Optimism

A child is born with the unconditional belief that they can trust those around them and that goodness is constant. When adults who are responsible for that child's care become unpredictable, the trust fades and dissipates. In a way, the world is rose-colored for children. If, however, it becomes unhinged, their world can shatter and cause doubts and insecurities.

Naivete

The concept of limitations does not exist in a child. From the moment they are born, children explore whatever and wherever they can without fear, protected by their caregivers who set boundaries, instill a sense of safety, and teach about danger while supporting this unwavering need for independence. If the adult is not diligent or willing to provide the necessary boundaries and enforce them with patience, a child may be put in a dangerous situation or taken advantage of.

The opposite can be said for an adult who is overprotective of their child and doesn't allow them to explore the world, even within their guidance. If a child is sheltered, they may not be able to incorporate themselves into the real world when the time comes since they are not equipped with the tools or experiences to integrate into regular situations.

Dependence

A child is helpless and unable to survive on their own. They need to be cared for and taught how to transition from a loving and supportive environment into taking responsibility for themselves. Some caregivers don’t want to relinquish their role and keep the child dependent on them, thereby stunting their own abilities to care for themselves.

Some adults can swing in the other direction and be neglectful of their child(ren) or expect too much of them. In this situation, a child may grow into an adult who isolates themselves from others or becomes overly dependent on a relationship with a friend or significant other.

Emotions

There is no shame in laughing at what delights you and crying when things make you sad. A child has no ability to deny themselves the feelings they have unless an adult steps in and tells them what they are feeling and how they are responding is not okay. This teaches the child to be ashamed of displaying emotions.

Resilience

The expression that kids are resilient is not an overstatement. Kids have the amazing ability to adapt to new environments and to move on from uncomfortable situations. They have no preconceived notion of what is to come, so they are able to accept their surroundings and situations at face value. It is when an adult places boundaries on a child’s ability to move on that we see an issue arise.

Free play

Children are filled with wonder and spontaneity. They have a natural sense of wonder that compels them to imagine wonderful things that seem very real in their wondrous mind. In the beginning, there is play without a need for anything but fun. This changes when a child becomes older, and the focus shifts to winning and goals, rather than just enjoying free play.

Uniqueness

It is important for a child to feel they are special and unique as they are, that they are complete no matter what. At some point, as our identities form, there can be disapproval from others or expectations that cannot be met. A child needs to be accepted for all that they are, without being told to change to comply with the expectation of others.

Love

All people are born with the disposition to be loving and show affection. Children are compelled from birth to need their parents and to feel safe in the arms of someone they trust. Often, a struggling parent may respond to a child who is not behaving the way they want by telling them that they are bad or that they never listen or always do things wrong. It is important to use language that lets the child know they are not using appropriate behavior, but they should know it is not a reflection of them, and it does not make them bad.

Inner Child Wounding

Allow yourself to recognize your childhood for better or worse. Your childhood experiences affect the adult you are today. The two phases of childhood and adulthood are both a part of you and the experiences you went through. Often, people are reluctant to acknowledge that the emotional development and mental health issues they have as adults stem from their childhood.

Also known as *attachment wounds*, inner child wounds can derive from traumatic childhood experiences. The responsibility of creating a safe and supportive environment for a child is the responsibility of the child's parents, but this is unfortunately not always provided.

The inner wounds of a child are

- **Abandonment:** You may have a fear of being abandoned by loved ones or being left out if someone abandoned you when you were a child.

- **Trust:** You may be afraid of being hurt if you were not protected from harm by your parents or adults in your childhood.
- **Guilt:** You may have difficulty setting boundaries or asking for help as an adult because you were made to feel guilty when you were a child.
- **Neglect:** If you were neglected as a child, you may have repressed emotions, trouble saying no, or low self-esteem.

Inner Child Wounds

Abandonment:	**Guilt:**
● Feel left out ● Fear of being left ● Don't like being alone ● Codependent ● Tend to attract those who are emotionally unavailable ● Threaten to leave	● Feelings of being sorry ● Don't like to ask for help ● Use guilt as manipulation tactic ● Afraid to set boundaries ● Usually attract people that make you feel guilty
Trust:	**Neglect:**
● Afraid of being hurt ● Don't trust yourself ● Don't feel safe ● Look for ways to distrust others ● Insecure and in need of external validation ● Attract those who feel unsafe	● Low self-worth ● Difficulty letting go ● Angered easily ● Repress emotions ● Difficulty saying no ● Afraid to be vulnerable ● Tends to attract those who don't make you feel seen or don't appreciate you

Signs of a Wounded Inner Child

Of the many signs that can manifest as a result of a wounded inner child, these are the most prevalent:

- difficulty saying “no”
- trouble setting and enforcing boundaries
- avoidance of conflict
- feelings of guilt if you stand up for yourself
- trouble asking for help (you feel like a burden)
- fear of letting go or being abandoned
- feelings that you are not adequate or are unworthy of love
- hard on yourself and self-critical

Questions to Get to the Root of Healing

You may not know what you went through in your childhood to bring on feelings of self-doubt and pain. Ask yourself the below questions to resolve this issue, develop a greater understanding, and eventually heal your inner wound.

- Were you bullied as a child?
- Did you feel neglected as a child?
- Did you fit in at school?
- Do you feel your voice was heard?
- Did you feel safe growing up?
- Were you ignored?
- Did you have appropriate boundaries?
- Was there an instance where you felt like something was wrong with you?
- When was the first time you lost trust in someone?

How is Your Wound Manifesting in Daily Life?

It can be frustrating when you work hard to have good relationships and do well at your job, only to feel underappreciated and misunderstood on a constant basis. If you find that despite your best efforts, you are still falling short, it may be your inner child manifesting in your daily life.

When issues from childhood go unresolved, they get carried over into our adulthood in the way that we deal with situations and people. Our emotional scars carry over from childhood and affect our lives until we acknowledge and resolve them. It can be difficult to lead a fulfilling life with meaningful relationships when people perceive your behavior as untoward.

Moving forward, the work you do will help heal your inner child and give you normalcy in life with stable relationships.

Effects of Childhood Trauma

Would you ever expect your five-year-old to make the meals, pay the bills, and run your errands? Of course not! This would be a tremendous and unrealistic expectation to put on a child. Those who have a wounded inner child are asking themselves to do the impossible and live a productive life that is essentially being run by the inner child.

In some adults, the wounded inner child can present itself with mental health issues and disorders. To function as a healthy adult, you need to work on healing your inner child so the behaviors you learned when you were young don’t continue to run your life today.

In some cases, it is important to seek the help of a mental health professional to help you deal with trauma from your past, especially if it stems from a severe or life-changing event. Once you have worked through the bulk of your childlike behaviors, you can begin to implement behavioral strategies and implement productive behaviors.

Signs Your Inner Child is Running Your Life

Not everyone is able to determine if their lives are being interrupted by a still unsettled and hurt inner child. Once you are able to identify the following

signs in yourself, you will become a step closer to appealing to your younger self and regaining control of your own decisions.

These are some signs that your inner child is the one in control:

- **Emotional versus logical thinking:** Often in life, we face the inevitable outcome of something not going as planned. In these circumstances, you may become angry or feel you were the victim, even plotted against. If your initial reaction stems from emotion rather than a logical perspective, this may be a sign that your reaction is coming from your inner child.
- **Difficulty assuming responsibility:** If you find it challenging to maintain the daily tasks you have committed to, or if you often bow out of your responsibilities, then your inner child may be doing the delegating. Responsible adults usually have no issue fulfilling their obligations. Even with reluctance, they still get it done.
- **Repetitive behavior:** You may notice similar patterns in relationships in your personal and work life. If this is the case, take note. These patterns might not be particularly harmful to anyone, but they should be addressed and recognized as a potential nudge that your inner child needs attention.
- **Substance abuse:** It is not uncommon for someone struggling with a wounded inner child to turn to drugs or alcohol to help them cope with their unresolved emotions. If you feel this is the only way to numb the emotional pain you are dealing with, this is a cry for help to listen to your inner child.
- **Legal troubles:** While getting a parking ticket or traffic violation once in a blue moon is common, you need to pay attention if you have a pile of unpaid tickets, arrests, or other legal issues stemming from a pattern of disregard for the law.
- **Instability in relationships:** If you have a pattern of disrespectful behavior from or toward others that leads to unstable and or unhealthy relationships, this is a strong sign that you have an inner child in need of proper care. Often, someone who has not healed their inner child,

will cling to and often seek out unproductive or toxic relationships that they know will never last.

The Four Attachment Styles

Attachment styles vary among people and are how we interact with and bind ourselves to those with whom we are closest. Identifying and understanding your attachment style can help you in several ways.

The four attachment styles are

- Secure
- Anxious-preoccupied
- Dismissive-avoidant
- Fearful-avoidant

These attachment styles stem from childhood and play a part in our relationships when we are adults. They can determine the success or difficulty of our romantic lives, yet when issues arise, we don’t link them to when we were younger.

What Do Attachment Labels Mean?

These attachment styles are primarily defined by our behaviors. For example, if someone is anxious about attachment, they could be clingy to their partner. An anxiously attached person may want to be in constant contact or close to the object of their affection at all times. It can be very stressful for that individual if they are separated from their attachment which can cause anxiety. They can even display sadness or anger when reunited with the person they are drawn to, which might serve to remind the person of their love or punish them for leaving in the first place.

Someone who has avoidance in attachment could show more cold or indifferent behavior. They may consider themselves to be independent, when they may be removing themselves from the possibility of engaging in healthy relationships. This person may even feel they should show their

detachment from partners or family by placing a higher priority on work, hobbies, or others whom they barely know.

As children, people become attached to their parents or caregivers and put their unwavering trust in them to keep them safe. The quality of that guidance and care, or the lack thereof, then informs our attachment styles as adults. Romantic relationships are the ones that have particularly strong attachment styles since these are most akin to the earliest relationships we had with those who cared for us in terms of vulnerability and familiarity.

Attachment Styles in Relationships

Every adult attachment style has distinctive relationship elements. However, these are only generalizations and not certainties. Understanding these patterns can help determine how your attachment style can negatively or positively affect your relationships.

- **Secure attachment:** Those with this attachment style are able to maintain suitable boundaries while having intimate partnerships. These people go into their relationships confidently and have low anxiety about their associations. Those with a secure attachment usually communicate effectively on any given topic, including problematic ones. They have a positive outlook on their relationships and are forward about what they need and want in those relationships and expect their partner to be upfront. If these people are unattached, they are not bothered, since they are generally comfortable and happy to be on their own.
- **Anxious-preoccupied:** Those with the anxious-preoccupied attachment style tend to be apprehensive in their relationships and may need frequent affirmation from their partner. This can often lead someone with this type of attachment style to magnify or invent conflicts within their relationships because they get a sense of security when they focus on these issues. They are also more pessimistic about their relationship and have a more anxious and paranoid outlook on the connection they have with their partner. This may originate from fear of losing their companion, and they may act jealous or possessive.

- **Dismissive-avoidant:** People with the dismissive-avoidant attachment style may come across as distant or cold and may be cautious of entering into a committed relationship, often insisting they don't want to settle down or be tied to one partner. These people can show their dismissive-avoidant style and independence by focusing on hobbies, work, or socializing with acquaintances, while simultaneously leaving their romantic partners out of the plans. This type of person is likely to display narcissistic traits and be passive-aggressive.
- **Fearful-avoidant:** People with fearful-avoidant attachment styles tend to be drawn to toxic relationships. This may be a result of their desire for a meaningful relationship but also their fear of an intimate relationship. They may want to be close to someone but may feel too vulnerable for the commitment that comes with it. Those with fearful-avoidant attachment push their partner away while simultaneously obsessing over them by showing affection one day and ignoring them the next day. These people tend to have a difficult time setting healthy boundaries within relationships.

Self-Sabotage

You may see a pattern in your life where problems recur and prevent you from reaching your goals. Even after making changes and setting forth a path for success, you end up failing time and again.

If you keep asking yourself why you can't overcome a hurdle or why failure chases you around, the answer may be very simple: You're self-sabotaging. This refers to behaviors or patterns of thought that prevent you from reaching your desired goals.

Self-sabotage can manifest in a variety of ways, including the following:

- **When things go awry, you blame others.** It is common to want answers when something bad happens or when things don't go according to plan, but sometimes no one is responsible, and the circumstance needs to be chalked up to bad luck. If you tend to find someone or something at fault whenever something goes wrong but

never find the fault lies with you, then you need to take a deeper look into the validity of this thinking process.

You may find that several friendships have ended due to various issues. Perhaps they weren't considerate when planning a night out, or they were too argumentative about parenting styles. While it may be true that your personalities were incompatible, if you don't consider you had a role to play in the dissolution of the friendship, you may be wasting an opportunity for growth within yourself.

- **Opting out when things don't go as planned.** Walking away from a bad relationship, job, or situation that is negative is the mature thing to do, but before you let go for good, think about your contribution to the event and if you made an effort to sort things out.

  You may find it difficult to keep a job for a great length of time due to poor management, overstaffing, or issues with coworkers, all of which are valid, but if you keep leaving a job after a relatively short period of time, you may want to look into the reasons more closely. If you have low-self esteem or doubt your worth in your current position, it may lead you to be disruptive in your work environment and prevent you from performing at your full potential. Fear of criticism or dealing with conflicts may be preventing you from giving it your full attention or efforts.

- **Instigating conflicts within romantic or platonic relationships.** There are many ways to undermine relationships, often without realizing you are doing it. Maybe you forget anniversaries or other important dates or don't pick up after yourself to provoke a reaction.

  You may also take things personally and assume that any offhanded comment is being made about you, even when it's not. Maybe you are close to sharing your feelings and like to hide when you are upset which leads to aggression or an unprovoked, snarky reaction when things build up, instead of keeping communication going.

- **You procrastinate.** Even the most proficient people hit a wall from time to time when it comes to productivity. If you have ever done all

the preparation or research for something and then stalled when it came time to execute the action, you are in the company of many.

Often, we set up all the things we need to get our work done or house organized, only to lose all motivation. We avoid the job that needs to be done, and instead focus our energy on social media, cleaning, or going shopping.

Even when we know we have work to do, procrastination often wins for no apparent reason. The following may be underlying causes:

- You second guess your abilities.
- You have time management issues.
- You feel overwhelmed with the monumental task at hand.

- **Difficulty asking for what you need.** Many people with a wounded inner child have difficulty asking for what they need. You may have difficulty speaking up for yourself in the following situations:
  - with family
  - among friends
  - in intimate relationships
  - at your workplace
  - in everyday situations

  For example, you are waiting for a parking spot at your doctor's office when another car swoops in and takes the spot. You feel you are not entitled to say anything, so you just wait for the next spot, circle around, and risk being late for your appointment.

- **Pursuing bad romantic connections.** In relationships, self-sabotaging behaviors are all too common. Settling for someone you know isn't right for you is a form of relationship self-sabotage, because it is clear from the beginning that it won't work.

  Signs of self-sabotage include

- remaining in a relationship with someone who has different wants, needs, and goals
- dating similar personality types that repeatedly end in disaster
- staying in a relationship that will never develop and will go nowhere

You deserve what you want in a relationship, and waiting for the right person is worth it. Avoid settling into romantic partnerships where you have different goals, such as one wants children and the other doesn't. Many people think they can change the person or themselves with time, but the fact is that no one should change to suit anybody else. Sometimes it is best to not get involved or to walk away as soon as you know the relationship is going nowhere.

- **Negative self-talk.** If you expect little of others but expect yourself to be perfect, you are setting yourself up for disappointment. Some people have harsh standards for themselves, while expecting the minimum or just enough from others.

  If you feel like you never do anything right or aren't good enough to apply for a certain position or tell yourself that you mess everything up, you are setting yourself up for failure.

  Whether you are outwardly vocal about your disapproval of yourself or keep the negative self-talk inside your head, the result can be the same: You may start to believe what you are saying. Once you believe the horrible things you are saying about yourself, you may lose passion for things you once loved or give up on your goals without even trying.

Why Do We Self-Sabotage?

People self-sabotage for many reasons and may or may not be aware they are doing it.

If someone didn't get the recognition or attention they deserved when they were a child, this could lead to self-sabotage. This can stem from trying to help clean the house for Dad, only to be told they were doing it wrong, or asking Mom to play, only to be told she didn't have time because she was

going out. This type of rejection in childhood can cause deep trauma that results in pushing people away before they have the opportunity to push you away.

People may self-sabotage with complete awareness they are doing so. Someone who is on a diet may eat high-calorie, high-fat, highly processed foods, such as doughnuts and chips, knowing it will sabotage the hard work they have put into losing weight so far.

Others may not be aware they are doing so. For example, they may be aware of a looming deadline but procrastinate and neglect to fulfill their obligation for getting the project done on time due to a fear that the final project will not meet expectations. This type of unconscious self-sabotage can lead to loss of work or missed opportunities within the company.

Below are some causes for such destructive behavior:

- issues or experiences that occurred in childhood
- previous relationships
- low self-esteem
- cognitive dissonance

Troubled Childhood

A dysfunctional childhood can increase the likelihood of self-sabotage. When you don’t grow up with a secure attachment style, you may adopt an avoidant attachment style later in life and show ambivalence. How your caregivers treated you in your childhood will reflect in how you deal with others in adulthood.

If someone is told that they will never amount to anything in their formative years, they may grow up to believe that, or may not try so they come up short in our endeavors.

Difficulty in Relationships

If you have had past partners who told you that you were not worth their time and always put you down, you may carry a feeling of unworthiness or insecurity into new relationships.

Even though your current relationship is great, you may test your partner's devotion to you by breaking things off to see if they will beg you to come back, or you might even be unfaithful.

Low Self-Esteem

People who have a low self-image are particularly vulnerable to self-sabotage. They are likely to behave in ways that confirm how little they think of themselves. When they feel they are on the verge of success, they become uncomfortable because they don't believe they deserve it. Their low self-esteem is what will hold them back from becoming truly successful.

Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance is a behavioral struggle that happens when your actions do not match your beliefs. This state of mind occurs when a person has a contradictory attitude, value, or belief about one particular thing. A good example of this is that people do not practice what they preach. Someone may speak vehemently about helping the homeless, but when they see a person curled under a bridge in the winter, they do nothing to intervene.

How to Stop Self-Sabotaging

As discussed, self-sabotage is likely to stem from a wounded inner child who has low self-esteem. Perhaps your parents, who weren't particularly successful in life, told you that you should focus on getting a job that would cover bills and nothing more. After all, who are you to go to a university and get a degree? If you were told from an early age that you weren't going to be successful in love, money, or life, then you may self-sabotage, because it makes you more comfortable to go without than it does to have what you want. You may even feel unsettled when your life is going well, because feelings of genuine happiness are disrupted by thoughts of what is inevitably (in your mind) going to go wrong because you certainly don't deserve a happy life.

Treatment to Help You Stop Sabotaging Yourself

Anyone who self-sabotages may find it challenging to regulate their behaviors and emotions. Emotional and behavioral dysregulation is frequently formed during childhood due to neglect or trauma. Harmful reactions can come from this dysregulation.

Fortunately, there is help for those who self-sabotage using various vices, such as

- excessive alcohol and drug use
- self-harm
- binge eating
- angry outbursts

The below therapy options are available to those who self-sabotage:

- **Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT):** This form of therapy uses techniques effective in relieving cognitive contortions. These techniques help you change negative thought patterns into more positive solutions to help raise your well-being.
- **Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT):** This therapy is helpful for those who are dealing with intense emotions, mental illness, and even personality disorders. This therapy is a way to learn how to regulate and better understand your emotions.

Healing your inner child will allow you to see yourself as a whole person, rather than the fragmented individual you have held together thus far. There is more to life than mediocrity, and it begins when you allow yourself to accept that you were hurt as a child. Only once you learn to acknowledge this fact, will the healing truly begin.

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Chapter 4

The Healing Power of Acceptance

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It can be overwhelming to initialize the healing process of your inner child, especially when you didn't know there was any healing to be done. A big part of moving through the trauma and acknowledging and dealing with the hurt from your childhood is allowing yourself time to relax and be calm in between these momentous steps.

Especially where hurting is involved, we need to allow ourselves to accept who we are, practice healthy self-acceptance, and validate our past experiences and emotions. Relaxation techniques are a way to help manage stress and return your body and mind to a state of calm.

Stress can have long-term effects on your physical and mental health, so particularly in times of need, it is crucial to focus on reducing stress through relaxation techniques. There are numerous benefits from detangling your mind and entering a state of calm, including the following:

- slowing your heart rate
- controlling your breathing
- improving digestion
- lowering blood pressure
- stabilizing blood sugar
- reducing anxiety
- stabilizing stress hormones
- improving sleep quality
- reducing fatigue
- stabilizing mood
- improving mind clarity
- increasing problem-solving abilities

Relaxation Techniques

Professional therapists can help you integrate relaxation techniques into your life, but there are also many techniques you can do at home. Relaxation techniques require you to focus on something calm to help increase awareness of your body. Choose the type of technique that speaks to you the most and gives you optimal benefits.

You may want to try a few of these techniques before deciding on one or alternate throughout these relaxation exercises:

- **Progressive muscle relaxation:** With this technique for relation, you focus on tightening each muscle group and then relaxing them. This can help isolate and make you more aware of physical sensations when the muscles alternatively tense and relax.

  To begin, you can tighten the muscles in your feet, and then relax them. Continue to focus on isolating, flexing, and releasing the various muscle groups all the way up to your head.

  Try to find a peaceful area where there are no interruptions and at a time during your day when you can usually find calm. Flex your muscles for around 5 seconds, release for 30 seconds, and repeat.

- **Autogenic relaxation:** Autogenic means self-generated and refers to, in this case, using visual imagery and your own body awareness to lessen stress.

  For this relaxation technique, you visualize a peaceful place that calms you. Focus on your breathing becoming even and your heart rate slowing down, then relax each part of your body one by one until you melt into a relaxing state.

- **Visualization:** In this technique, you are going to use a mental image and visualize a place you love that makes you feel calm and safe and promotes a feeling of peace.

  Using visualization requires you to use as many of your senses as possible, such as sound, smell, sight, and touch. If you visualize a beach, imagine the wind on your face, the smell of the ocean, and the sound of the waves crashing on the shore.

Sit in a quiet and comfortable location, close your eyes, and revisit your favorite place, focusing on your breathing while thinking happy thoughts and repeating positive affirmations.

Simple Relaxation Techniques

Some additional simple relaxation techniques to bring you some calm amid a hectic day include

- yoga
- deep breathing
- meditation
- massage
- tai chi
- aromatherapy
- music and art therapy
- hydrotherapy

Relaxation Techniques Take Practice

As you practice relaxation techniques, you will learn to be more in tune with the physical effects of stress, such as muscle tension. You can take a more active role in how your body responds to stress by providing an outlet when you begin to feel the symptoms come on. Utilizing these techniques can prevent stress from overtaking your life and can help prevent depression and anxiety.

Relaxation techniques take time to master so don't be hard on yourself or feel you have done it wrong if you don't feel much initial benefit. It will take time to master relaxation techniques, as it does with any other skill.

Try a few different relaxation techniques to see which is best for you. If one doesn’t work, that might not mean that you failed at it, but that it wasn’t the best way for you to destress.

Validating Your Inner Child

Your inner child has dealt with emotional neglect for years, so the best thing you can do is to acknowledge them. You have already taken a step toward showing them they are being heard and their pain is being validated.

Validation means to show someone you acknowledge their emotional journey. When you judge or ignore someone, the person feels they are being rejected and that their feelings don't matter.

You don't have to agree with the person's actions by validating their feelings. You are showing them that you understand their perspective on a situation, but are by no means suggesting you would do or feel the same way. Validating someone's feelings lets them know they are seen, no matter what your personal opinions on the matter are. You are simply acknowledging that they are accepted for who they are. This same message can be sent to our inner child.

By validating their experience and hearing their voice, you are letting them know that they are seen and heard.

Validating Your Inner Child's Experiences

Go back to the discovery of your core wounds. It is important to identify the wounding that occurred and what your inner child is holding on to so that you can validate their emotions.

You need to begin validating your inner child by being present and interested in what they dealt with in childhood. It may be difficult to articulate how they feel in the beginning, but be patient and allow them to work through their feelings in a safe place, without being rushed or judged.

The next step is to nurture their wounds by responding with words of affirmation and assuring them their feelings are valid and their reaction to their wound is understandable. Here are some examples of what to say to let your inner child know that you are listening:

- I see you and I hear you.
- That sounds like it was difficult to go through.

- It sounds like that is a lot to handle.
- That must have been really hard to deal with.
- I acknowledge your feelings.
- There is no such thing as a bad child.
- Your mistakes do not define you.
- I understand that must have been scary.
- Adults should never put that responsibility on a child.

Healing Exercises for Your Inner Child

Below are some healing exercises you can do to relieve your inner child:

- **Validate:** The first thing you need to do is validate the feelings of your inner child. Always begin with reassurance and empathy, and let them know that their feelings are valid. It is important to let them know what they feel is proportionate to what they went through. It is important to include this step and face your inner child with compassion and empathy and not simply force your way through this first stage.

  By validating your inner child, you are acknowledging the pain you went through in your childhood. As painful as it is, you need to associate the pain of your inner child with the initial link that it leads from your past and make sure you process those emotions. When you identify these childhood traumas and acknowledge that as an adult, you still suffer from these wounds, you will be able to work through them and begin to move forward. By identifying the event from your childhood that led to the wound of your inner child, you will be able to move forward and let go of the painful past.

  An example of validating your inner child would be

  > *Of course, you feel afraid and alone right now. You were never made to feel safe because your parents would dismiss your fears, no matter what they were of. If you were afraid of the*

dark, they would tell you to go to bed and dismiss your fears. I am here and I am listening to what you have to say. I understand that you can be afraid and not understand why, and that's okay. I'll help you figure things out.

- **Separate:** Once you have emphasized with your inner child and validated their feelings, you need to make the distinction between right now and the past. Let your inner child know that they are whole and good, no matter what happens. Relay what happened to them was not because of who they are; the pain was not their fault. Use actual examples of differentiating between now and the past so the inner child believes they are safe and the things that hurt them in the past are really behind them.

  An example of separating the past and present would be

  You should not be ashamed of the fear you feel; that is something your parents taught you. Being made to feel ashamed of being afraid was wrong. I validate your feelings, and I am not going anywhere. You will not have to go through anything alone and feel unsupported as you were when you were a young child because I am here to protect you. It is my honor to reassure and support you. It is okay to feel scared at times, and I am happy to comfort you.

- **Have a positive vision:** Once you validate your inner child and differentiate, it is important to continue the dialogue with a positive vision that will bring a feeling of comfort, inspiration, safety, and freedom to your inner child. This can be a vision that becomes increasingly large over time into a more detailed vision. Once you have shared this vision, you should experience a sense of release, and you will feel light, calm, peaceful, and lucid.

  An example of a positive vision would be

  Now that we have found one another, we are going to be able to move forward in life with a greater sense of peace and closure every day. Let's go for a walk and just enjoy nature.

Choose Self-Compassion Over Shame

Shame is a terrible feeling to have and is unwarranted in most circumstances. This negative feeling is attributed to self-judgment over something we feel we should hide from other people. Practicing self-compassion is a way to be kind to yourself and diminish the feelings of shame that self-judgment magnifies.

Shame is usually ingrained in us from childhood because someone who was in charge of our happiness also implied that we were bad or had done something unforgivable. The thing with children is that they don't forget as easily as people assume they do. Moments that are damaging to emotional well-being can be a lifelong challenge.

It's not easy to overcome shame just because you can identify when it began. It often requires a lot of self-work, often with the guidance of a mental health professional.

Have Some Compassion for Yourself

Self-compassion, or lack thereof, is directly correlated to feelings of shame, anxiety, or embarrassment. Be kind to yourself, and you will find it comes more naturally as you deal with your past pain, emotional experience and the shame you were made to feel.

Pain and Emotions

There is no way to avoid negative experiences throughout our entire lives, but how we react to those situations can have a significant impact on our behavior. For example, if you react with shame to a negative experience, you are displaying self-criticism that can cause you to isolate yourself from others.

Your self-confidence and self-esteem can become extremely low when your inner voice is heckling you. Depression, drug use, eating disorders, and anxiety in social situations are also linked to low self-confidence. When you withdraw from people, you isolate yourself and make it unlikely that you will build or maintain a support network and meaningful relationships

in your life. When you distance yourself from others, you are making your world, including your support network, very limited.

Causes for shame can include

- body image
- relationships
- work
- health
- sex
- religion
- money
- trauma
- being labeled

What Is Self-Compassion?

Self-compassion allows you to reassure yourself and calm your anxieties when you are going through times of doubt.

You may need to work on the skills to become self-compassionate, since it involves being able to accept yourself as you are and understand where your mental state and feelings are coming from and how to avoid self-judgment.

Examples of self-compassion would be saying to yourself things like the following:

- “Today I didn’t do as much work as I wanted to. Tomorrow I’ll get on it first thing.”
- “I’m allowed to express what I am feeling, especially when someone is not respecting my boundaries.”
- “If I want to spend the day at home reading, it doesn’t mean I’m lazy; it means I’m taking care of myself.”

Keep in mind that showing yourself compassion is not the same as making excuses. If you didn't do something you promised you would, own up to it, but if you set out to do more than you were capable of doing, all you have done is mismanaged your time. Accept you are not perfect—none of us are —and embrace the beauty of not expecting every little thing to go right.

Overcoming Shame

We know how damaging shame can be and that it affects our self-confidence and self-worth. It is crucial to override this toxic feeling to be more productive by accepting yourself as you are or changing the way you think about yourself.

Allowing yourself to be kinder to yourself and abolishing shame will help you shed the burden you have been carrying around with you. Shame is not conducive to a healthy relationship, especially with yourself. Give yourself a healthier outlook on life by initializing your self-worth, no matter what anyone else says or thinks.

Practice Visualization to Soothe Your Inner Child

Visualization is an effective way to connect with your inner child and help deal with childhood trauma. To use this method to help heal your inner child, create a safe place where you can connect. Visualize a place where you feel empowered and safe; somewhere you are away from critique. Once you are in your beautiful, visual garden, at the beach, or anywhere that you feel safe, invite your inner child to talk things through.

To begin visualization, do the following:

- Choose a quiet, calm area.
- Close your eyes, breathe deeply and purposely, and relax.
- Imagine you are walking down a serene, winding path. The path is your safe place where you feel supported and untouchable from anything harmful.
- Once you have found your safe place, take some time to allow the ambiance to seep into your core. Is it bright and colorful or dim and

calming? Is there a creek rolling in the distance or wind blowing through the trees? What does it smell like?

- Once you have become acquainted with your safe place, picture your inner child walking down the same path toward you.
- When you greet your inner child, embrace them warmly and show them they are loved.
- Once you are both settled in, ask your inner child to tell you when they first felt shame, fear, or loneliness. Word it in a way a child would understand and respond to.
- Wait patiently for them to answer.
- Tell them you appreciate them and acknowledge their pain.
- Say your goodbyes and watch them leave.
- Walk back down the path and out of your safe space.
- Return to your conscious state.

Follow these basic steps, or something similar, to meet with, acknowledge, and release your inner child. This needs to be a confident place where emotions are allowed in all their forms.

Children see the world differently than adults, even our own inner children. You may assume certain events didn't play a part in your wounded inner child because you perceive those situations differently as an adult, but as a child, they might have been extremely painful. You can never assume on behalf of your inner child.

Through working on your inner child, you will learn to grieve, heal, and work through the trauma you have held subconsciously throughout your adult life. This can signify a release from the emotional barriers you had with your inner child and provide you with spiritual maturity, emotional balance, and well-being.

Prompts for Journaling to Connect to Your Inner Child

Part of validating your inner child is listening to what they have to say. Journaling is an important part of this journey and should be done often. If you are not sure how to begin a conversation with someone you know well but haven’t spoken to in years, here are some prompts to get you started.

Ask yourself some of the following questions:

1. What did I enjoy playing most as a child?

2. Did I have a favorite place to spend time?

3. What was I happiest doing?

4. What made me feel safe and content?

5. What was something I missed out on as a child?

6. Did I get to be with friends? If not, why? If so, how did I feel when I was with them?

7. How can I make sure I experience what I lacked in childhood?

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Chapter 5

Reframing the Past

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As an adult, you have gone through experiences and have gained a perspective that impacts how you expect life to go. Some of the experiences may be uncomfortable to consider.

Often, enlisting the help of a therapist can be useful, especially if you are spiraling in a pattern of negative thoughts and emotions. When reframing is used in a therapeutic capacity, it is referred to as cognitive restructuring.

Reframing your past can be beneficial to your mental state. Mental reframing is when you shift your mindset to look at a specific person, relationship, or situation and see it from a marginally different perspective.

Cognitive Distortions

Cognitive distortions are predisposed outlooks we see in the world around us. These are illogical beliefs and thoughts that we reinforce over time. These sequences can be subtle and challenging to recognize when they are a part of our every day. Since they are such a consistent part of our lives, it can be difficult to see that something needs restructuring.

Cognitive distortions can come in several forms but all share commonalities. The cognitive distortions are as follows:

- patterns of thinking or beliefs
- tendencies that are inaccurate or untrue
- the potential to inflict psychological harm

Admitting you have false beliefs and distorted thoughts may be terrifying, but no good comes from relieving these facilities daily.

Anyone can have cognitive distortions, even if only occasionally. Those who have consistent distortions struggle with identifying and modifying these incorrect ways of thinking.

What Is Cognitive Reframing or Cognitive Restructuring?

Cognitive reframing or restructuring is a restorative exercise that allows the client to challenge, replace, discover, or modify their defeatist thoughts or cognitive distortions. It helps people reform their false way of thinking about themselves and those around them. Therapists use this tool to reduce stress by encouraging more positive and productive thoughts.

It may seem unfathomable to change a negative mindset that has regurgitated through your mind for years, but just as with any other skill, it becomes easier to second-guess your disruptive thoughts over time.

Our thinking can make us believe in variations of the truth, which seems shocking, considering the majority of our thoughts are rational. These cognitive distortions are a biased way to think about our environment. They are beliefs and patterns of thought that are illogical, inaccurate, and false and have the ability to hurt our self-confidence and our ability to be successful.

Magnification or minimization is the most common cognitive misrepresentation. They affect how we gauge what goes on around us and to us.

Types of Cognitive Distortions

Below is a list of the most common cognitive distortions:

- **Polarization of thoughts:** This disorder occurs when a person creates acute thoughts surrounding polar opposite groups (something is good or evil) and ignores median steps with unrealistic proportions. A polarized thought is distorted and can cause great emotional distress.

  An example of polarized thinking would be to think in extremes, such as you are either going to find love or be alone for the rest of your life.

- **Selective filtration:** With this disorder, the one affected eliminates all positive events and deflects the attention onto the negative, augmenting them. The person takes comfort in the negative characteristics to interpret their actuality.

Someone might only see their failures and consider their lives a mess without acknowledging the success in life. Those with this distortion revisit the scenarios in their life that they fear most.

- **Overgeneralization:** This means that one negative incident will become the normal ending for all other similar situations. In the event, if something unfavorable happens one day, the individual will likely think that the bad thing will happen every time. This can also be compared to the oppositional view that something will always be or never be a certain way.
- **Demand and perfectionism:** Inflexible and strict ideas of how other people and themselves ought to be. The person is always seeking satisfaction within themselves or others because they are finding something wrong in everything.

  The consequence of this is guilt, low self-esteem, and frustration with thinking they always fall short of expectations. Their unwavering demands on those around them cause others to feel anger toward them.
- **Projection:** The person displays frustration, weakness, or problems they don't want to acknowledge and expects others to have these characteristics too.
- **Elimination of the positive:** This thinking implies that people exclude the positive achievements in their lives by chalking it up to luck or chance or by saying positive events are rare events that don't frequently happen when they are oblivious to the majority of these good events.
- **Magnification and minimization (catastrophic vision):** Catastrophic vision is a distortion that can trigger anxiety. It is depicted by the person expecting that the worst-case scenario will always occur or that the situation is considered more serious than it is.

  Minimization represents the opposite thought in those with anxiety. Obsession or depression mainly consists of ignoring the good

moments or events that occur in their lives. When you are unable to appreciate the good moments in your life, your happiness and quality of life suffers.

- **Personalization:** In this egocentric way of thinking, the person with this cognitive distortion thinks everything people say or do has something to do with them specifically and that the world revolves around them.

  These people tend to take everything personally, even when they have nothing to do with the situation or event. An example you might notice in yourself is taking responsibility for circumstances that were out of your control or not your fault. These people may also make the incorrect assumption that they were targeted or intentionally left out.

- **Emotional reasoning:** This is the inaccurate belief that the way you are feeling is what is real, that the way you feel within a situation is reality. Expressing your feelings and receiving validation for those feelings is important, but so is reacting to a situation based on facts and evidence.

- **Labeling:** This is a cognitive distortion where people reduce themselves or others to one characteristic that is likely negative, such as a loser or drunk. This labeling defines someone based on one act or single event that can cause the person to berate themselves and underestimate or misinterpret others.

Managing Distortions

Fortunately, there are ways to manage these distortions over time. Don’t expect an instant remedy, but the following thoughtful changes can help change thought patterns, including:

- **Identify the thought.** Figuring out why you are having depressed or anxious thoughts is key to figuring out how to dissolve them. Understanding the depth of where these issues are rooted will allow you to dig them up and out of your subconscious.

- **Look for alternative thinking.** Look for variations to your thinking, such as alternative reasoning, positive interpretations, and objective evidence to elaborate your thinking. There is often another explanation you can come to when you put thought into it. Try writing your original thought on paper, and then write three alternative interpretations, and see where your thinking ends up.
- **Analyze the productivity of your thoughts.** When behavior provides some sort of positive response or benefit, people tend to repeat the action. Analyze how patterns in your thought process may have benefitted you and initiated coping mechanisms in the past. Do they allow you to feel in control when you otherwise would have felt powerless? Do they let you get away without admitting to taking risks that were unnecessary? What are the cons and pros of cognitive distortion and what does it take from you?

Cognitive distortions are habits in your thinking patterns that can be negatively biased and untrue. These distortions normally develop over months or years in response to negative events.

Cognitive Restructuring

How you perceive a situation affects the way you respond to it. Our responses and perceptions are strongly guided by feelings. If you have an inaccurate, exaggerated, or instant response or interpretation to an event in life, you may go on having distorted perspectives of reality, otherwise known as cognitive distortions.

Cognitive distortions not only shape your feelings and thoughts but also your behavior, and they can have an effect on your health, especially in the long term. By practicing cognitive restructuring, you are challenging your perspectives and thoughts. Practice techniques that will build fresh insights into an event or situation, and create a more balanced perspective.

Ask yourself the following questions to challenge your perspective:

- Is there evidence to back up my perspective?
- Is there a side to the situation that I am unaware of?

- Would others come to this same conclusion?
- Is there a gray area I’m not taking into consideration?
- Am I holding myself to unrealistic expectations?
- What is affected by my way of thinking?

It is common to become wrapped up in cognitive distortions, but recognizing them will allow you to take control and challenge them. Ask yourself questions to challenge the distortions, thereby creating a perspective that is more balanced.

Cognitive Restructuring Worksheet

Which behaviors did your caregivers use in your childhood?

- Blaming
- Teasing/laughing at
- Manipulating
- Physical or emotional withdrawal or abandonment
- Betraying
- Shaming
- Criticizing
- Patronizing
- Enmeshment
- Invalidating
- Conditional love

In what ways do you use them now?

Behavior → Action

Think of the situations in which these things happened. What would have been a nurturing response?

Situation → Nurturing Response

Examine the Evidence

Socrates was one of the most influential philosophers in history. He died in 399 BC. He stressed the importance of reflecting on our thoughts by exclaiming, “An unexamined life is not worth living” (Reference, 2020).

Socratic questioning is an effective tool for contemplation and promoting problem-solving and self-discovery. This can be a constructive catalyst for managing mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. In CBT, the client and therapist work together to search for the logic behind negative thoughts and irrational beliefs.

Therapists often use Socratic questioning when they want to help the patient confront the distorted ideas they have and gain more mental clarity and emotional and behavioral stability.

Socratic Questioning in CBT

Socratic questioning encourages you to ask questions that promote self-reflection and initiate problem-solving. It is often used in CBT to help with the assisted discovery process.

It works with the collaborative philosophy practiced in CBT which includes working with a registered therapist to identify and help replace negative thinking patterns. This has become known as a favorable approach to therapy to help improve the outcome for patients by enabling them to explore various perspectives, which leads to a new way of thinking and more validation in feelings and clear thinking.

Why Is a Question Considered Socratic?

This type of questioning helps you explore something in greater depth, identify relationships, and form greater clarity in your thinking.

The qualities that make a question Socratic are below:

- **Clear:** Questions must be direct and free of unnecessary ramblings. A Socratic question is straightforward and clear; easy to understand.

  An example of a clear Socratic question is, “Why do I always feel bad about myself after I hang out with Charlotte?”

  An example of a more ambiguous question that could have many answers is, “Why am I always like this?”

  This unclear question can have many answers, because the specific behavior isn’t named. To analyze properly, the actions, people, and situations all need to be set out clearly.

- **Open:** To encourage discussions and produce more helpful thoughts, ask open-ended questions. Open-ended questions lead to answers that require more thought and then to have a more detailed explanation. They can also be less intimidating and increase the opportunity to have a more fruitful dialogue.

  Open-ended questions are ones that cannot be answered with a simple “yes” or “no.” To keep a conversation going and to get adequate information, you want to ask questions that are open, such as the following:

  - Why did you decide to go into nursing?
  - What is the most jarring experience you have gone through?
  - How do you imagine your life in ten years?

- **Neutral:** Neutrality is important, because if you ask a biased question like, “What’s wrong with me?” then you are already assuming an answer and therefore are not acknowledging reality. By avoiding biased opinions, even by yourself, this type of question becomes powerful, because it provides unlimited possibilities and not just the perception you have at the moment.

- **Focused:** Specific questions can open up new avenues of learning and drive us to delve into new topics and discover new things. The question needs to be on a specific topic or issue. By examining one particular problem, the Socratic question can bring us a greater understanding of our thinking.

Examples of Socratic Questioning

The following are examples of Socratic questions:

- What did you mean when you said…?
- What is the point?
- Give me an example.
- Do you mean…?
- What did you expect the outcome to be?
- Are there different points of view? What is an example?
- What was the most important thing about that question?

Finding a New Perspective

Cognitive distortions can be changed over time, and a new perspective can be found. Here are some steps that you can take to help change your way of thinking and have more productive thoughts:

- **Identify the thought causing you anxiety.** There are going to be specific thoughts that make you feel anxious or cause you to feel depressed. The first step is to recognize what that thought is and the responsible distorted thinking.
- **Reevaluate the situation.** There is always a gray area or alternate explanation for what has occurred. Try implementing objectivity and look for a more positive interpretation of the situation that you deemed negative. Things are not always what they appear to be.
- **Evaluate your gains.** As difficult as it is to admit, you may be perpetuating negative behavior because it brings you an outcome that

benefits you or gives you a feeling of accomplishment. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Are you behaving in a way that gives you a feeling of superiority?
- Do you feel in control of the situation when you interpret a scenario or situation a certain way?
- Does your behavior allow you to avoid taking responsibility for something you have done?

Determine how your thought patterns have affected relationships, jobs, and other connections you may have lost. Considering what you are missing out on might allow you to take control of your unhinged thoughts.

CBT

You can participate in many activities that will help you revisit your inner child, including art therapy.

Cognitive behavioral therapy, as we have discussed, is a form of therapy that helps someone identify and interpret descriptive ways of thinking and change them to a more healthy and optimistic pattern.

This form of therapy allows you to focus on what you want for yourself in the future and helps you set goals to get there. You can look forward to a more stable relationship with yourself and others within a few weeks to months as results become apparent.

Socratic Questioning Worksheet

Those who are suffering from a wounded inner child or other neurological or mental illness are likely to have an inner dialogue that never shuts off. The mind can conjure up thoughts and scenarios that provoke a negative response or emotion and affect the way we perceive and respond to a situation.

To prevent your rampant thoughts from running your emotions, take the time to respond to each thought by questioning whether the emotions it is

making you feel hold validity.

- Thought that needs to be challenged:
- Is there evidence supporting the thought? Disproving it?
- Is the thought based on feelings or on facts?
- Could I be making assumptions and misinterpreting the evidence or situation?
- Is this a black-and-white thought that I am having or the more complicated reality?
- Could others interpret the same situation differently? What are those interpretations?
- Am I considering all the evidence or just looking for ways to justify my perception of the situation?
- Are my thoughts an exaggeration of reality?
- Did this information come from someone else, or did I witness this?
- Is my thinking the worst-case scenario, or is it a likely depiction of the truth?

- Is this a thought I usually have, or is there a specific fact that supports it?

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Chapter 6

Reparenting the Inner Child

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You have introduced yourself to your inner child, accepted them, and let them know they are safe with you. Now it is time to reparent your inner child. Once your inner child is open to speaking freely, you can deepen the conversation in the new safe space you have created together.

Reparenting was introduced in the 1970s by Dr. Lucia Capacchione through art therapy. This technique focuses on showing your inner child they are loved, protected, and accepted in a way they lacked in their adolescent years. A large part of our personality stems from the power that our inner child holds over us into adulthood, in our thoughts, relationships, decisions, and how we approach situations and interpret them. Now is the time to reintroduce techniques to your inner child to minimize the negative loops that cause you anxiety and the mindset that is closing you off from acceptance of a productive and happy life.

Ways to Begin a Healing Dialogue With Your Inner Child

As with any new relationship, you may not know how to dive in and get a dialogue going. It often helps to put to paper what is bothering us about ourselves or someone else, because it helps release what we've been holding onto and are too afraid to say. The same can be done with your inner child. To begin, you will need to have two pieces of paper ready (envelopes optional), but don't worry about sending them anywhere, as they are only meant to release the pain and begin healing.

You will be writing one letter as your inner child to those who made them unworthy or ignored as a child and then a second from yourself to your inner child.

Letter From the Inner Child to the People/Person Who Caused Trauma

The letters you send from your inner child should have no boundaries so the inner child can say exactly what they need to. Address the people in your

life who hurt you, abandoned you, or made you feel shame. Say anything you kept inside when you were young. Let all the pain out without holding back. Allow your inner child to say all they were too afraid to say when they had no voice.

There should be nothing unsaid and no worries about anyone else's feelings, because no one will ever read your letter. This is a healing process that will only help if you allow your inner child to direct their anger at those who hurt them most when they were too small to stand up for themselves. There is no need to explain your inner child's feelings; just say what you need for their tiny voice to finally be heard.

Letter to Your Inner Child

When you write to your inner child, you need to be careful with your words. Your words to this child will be absorbed completely and will redirect how they behave and interact with you. Give your inner child the compassion and validation they never received when they were young.

Begin by acknowledging the suffering your inner child endured. This will let them know that you see them, you hear them, and you will always be there for them. Adamantly deny them of any wrongdoing and help alleviate the guilt they might have been carrying all this time. They are not to blame for any of the pain they've been holding onto, and none of the unpleasantness they felt was because they were bad or inadequate. Let them know you are going to help protect them and help them move beyond their pain, but make sure they know they can always bring it up if need be.

Tell your inner child that they are brave for speaking to you now and strong for showing such vulnerability. Reinforce that you will always be present for them and will remain a steadfast guide of love in their life.

Speak Aloud to Your Inner Child

Some use a mirror to speak directly to themselves during this exercise, but you do not have to. You do need to ask your inner child questions out loud, speaking to your reflection or just to the air. Answer the questions truthfully

and without restraint. If you feel emotional, comfort your reflection or yourself.

Use words you never heard when you were young, words that you wish had been said to you to soothe you or make you less afraid or feel more loved.

Write in a Journal or Diary as Your Inner Child or Adult

Dr. Lucia Cappachione, author of *The Power of Your Other Hand: A Course in Channeling the Inner Wisdom of the Right Brain*, suggests using your dominant hand to write as the adult and non-dominant hand for the inner child when journaling. This technique, according to Dr. Cappachione, engages the right brain, which is connected to emotional expression.

The dominant hand is that of the adult and should be used to write things to let the inner child know they are heard and are safe. The non-dominant hand should speak as the wounded inner child who is just discovering a way to speak for themselves. Your mind will distinguish the conversation between the two personalities using opposite hands that represent each half of you as they work together to become whole and learn about each other.

Artistic Expression

When you were a child, what made you really excited? What inspired you or made you feel that you could do anything? Whether through singing, dancing, drawing, or writing, these creative expressions help create a place of escape where you feel calm and safe.

Communicate in a way that makes you feel heard and in a space that allows you to become lost in the activity. Using artistic expression rather than words can be a powerful way to bring your emotions to the surface and allow them to be faced with honesty. The more in tune your inner child is with the activity, the more outpouring of creative energy and emotion can be released.

Make Time to Play With Your Inner Child

Your inner child needs to come out to play from time to time, and you need to be ready and willing to go on the adventure alongside them. When you

feel a lighthearted or childish moment coming on, embrace it and the joy of freedom you once felt.

Watching shows, reading books, or revisiting places you loved as a child can help pull you back into a carefree world that was colorful and animated and limitless when you were younger. No activity is off limits as long as it's safe. Go play on the swings, go puddle jumping, or have a snowball fight. Reintroduce yourself to the unbridled joy of your inner child when they found their happy place.

Nurturing Your Inner Child as the Parent You Needed

Nurturing your inner child and showing them the compassion and love you wish you had as a child is essential for taking back your life. How can you parent yourself the way you wish you were parented or protected by the adult in your childhood? To answer this question, you need to ask yourself the following to determine what your wounded inner child needs:

- Is it a safe place?
- Is it acceptance?
- Do you need to be recognized for what makes you special?
- Do you need someone to stand up for you?
- Do you need emotional validation?
- Do you need to be heard?
- Do you need to feel that someone was proud of you?

Some ways to help yourself receive this inner validation include the following:

- **Have a safe place.** Everyone needs to feel safe, and routine is a positive way to promote that feeling. Safety can come in many forms, from how we make our home to the company we keep, but it can also come in the form of rituals that we perform each day to remind

ourselves of the stability we have created. This ritual may include taking a walk through the same park each day or having a morning coffee while reading the paper. How we feel safe is personal, so find your safe space, ritual, or people, and visit at least once a day.

- **Be accepted.** You may not feel accepted because of mistakes you made in the past, but that needs to change. Everyone has done something they wish they could take back, whether it was done intentionally or not.
- **Learn from your mistakes and spin them into something that is more positive in the future.** If you do falter, simply ask yourself what you could do differently next time. Do not dwell on the misstep but on the positive steps you can take to create a different outcome in the future. This is known as a fixed mindset.
- **Envelope mistakes and use them for learning purposes.** Write down times you judge yourself and are self-critical, and then see how these outlooks can be shifted into a more positive form of acceptance. Things may not shift to the fixed mindset immediately, but with practice, you will accept yourself and all your beautiful mistakes.
- **Recognize what makes you unique.** Children are innately curious and seek out answers to the observations they make about the world around them, but sometimes they blurt out rather embarrassing statements about individuals who may appear different, such as
    - Why is that man yelling?
    - Why does that woman have only one leg?
    - Does that kid need to stay in that wheelchair forever?

  These are all valid questions, and they should be asked. Children tend to feel awkward that they don’t belong to the restrictions we put on what they may ask of others or what others may ask of them. If your child has engine red hair and freckles, wore glasses from an early age, was born with one arm, or has some other unique trait, they need to feel comfortable about it.

Just as a child deserves to feel special for their unique qualities, so do you. Write down a list of your unique traits, talents, features, etc., and then write something fascinating about it. If you have dyslexia, guess what? So do Henry Winkler, Anderson Cooper, and Albert Einstein!

Embrace your uniqueness! You're already one of a kind, so anything extra just proves how amazing you are.

- **Validate your emotions.** Much distress in the inner child comes from adults not allowing them to display emotions. They are often perceived as having weakness or bad behavior and are told not to cry or say certain things when they are mad but just to forget about the experience and move on. This invalidates a child and makes a lasting impression on an inner child that moves forward through adulthood.

  Don't push your feelings away when they come to you. If you're angry or disappointed, allow yourself to feel these emotions without judgment or reaction. Your feelings need to be acknowledged at the moment because you have a right to feel what comes naturally to you. Without telling yourself to stop feeling, soothe yourself as you would have wanted your parents to do when you were young. Tell yourself you understand these feelings are valid and you will sit as long as you need.

  Don't allow shame to become any part of your reaction to what you're going through. When the adults around you said you were a failure, or a baby, or whiny, or not good enough, it was they who were wrong. Remember you were taught to feel shame and undeservedly so. You are not perfect and you do have flaws—as does everyone—so accept it and feel your feelings.

- **Be heard.** A child's voice is small, but it has as much to say as anyone else. Perhaps you felt no one listened to you when you were small, whether it was about what you wanted for dinner, where you wanted to go on vacation, or how you felt about moving away from your home or school.

Sit your inner child down and apologize on behalf of the adults who never acknowledged what they had to say, and assure them you are listening now. Recount each time you didn't feel you had a voice and validate each experience so your inner child knows they are not silenced anymore. Ask your inner child how they felt, why they felt that way, and what they would have liked the adult in their life to do differently. Give that to them now.

- **Feel proud of you.** Many children spend what should be the happiest years of their lives struggling to find acceptance within their own space: their home. The family that should support them and love them expresses disappointment no matter how hard they try.

  You were made to feel your accomplishments weren't enough and, in turn, you weren't enough. Perhaps you got a B- that you worked especially hard for but were asked why you didn't get an A? Or you came in second in a relay and your dad scoffed that you should have trained harder to be number one. No matter what you did, it wasn't enough, so you felt ashamed and that you would never live up to expectations.

  Tell your inner child they were enough, their triumphs were in trying at all, and they should be proud of their achievements because you couldn't be more thrilled with their efforts.

  Make a list of all the sports, teams, and adventures you were a part of during your childhood, and name your favorite thing about each one as well as something you were really good at. Tell yourself how proud you were back then and how nothing about that has changed.

Rewrite the Future With a Behavioral Experiment

Psychotherapists suggest clients conduct behavioral experiments that test their beliefs. It is a powerful technique used in cognitive behavioral therapy that helps provide clarity to one's assumptions, rather than seeing things from only their perspective.

If you only believe one thing for sure, you may be ignorant of the truth, such as what actually happened, who did what, or how things transpired. Holding onto your beliefs unequivocally can mislead you.

For example, someone who believes they will be overweight because there is a family history of obesity and related illnesses may be encouraged to try a variety of ways to maintain a healthy weight, such as

- exercising
- eating healthy
- getting plenty of rest

How the Experiment Works

Cognitive behavioral therapists, as mentioned previously, work with people to help them recognize their issues and the emotions, thoughts, and beliefs about these issues or problems. The therapist then helps the patient identify false thoughts and patterns that make the issue worse.

The next step is to help the person challenge their illogical and unproductive thoughts through the processes of questioning them and encouraging them to think of other ways to see the issue at hand.

Questions need to be asked by the therapist that helps the patient see deviations from their presuppositions. For example, a therapist might ask a client who insists they can’t do anything what was something they did well.

This simple form of questioning can help the patient realize they are not entirely accurate in their assumptions.

When someone believes deeply that they are a certain way or that something is entirely true, it can be challenging to change the thought patterns around these core beliefs, partly because we are more ready to see evidence that supports what we think instead of what proves us wrong.

If someone believes they have no skills and then gets rejected for a job they applied for, they may consider this proof that they are not good at anything. Alternatively, if they are invited out with a group of friends, they may consider this out of sympathy and not because they like their company.

Someone may begin to believe in their abilities when they accomplish something they never thought they could, such as completing a triathlon or getting a promotion. Likewise, if someone gets a positive response from someone they assumed would put them down, they may release the thoughts that everyone is untrustworthy.

Behavioral experiences can help build up self-esteem by gathering proof they are capable and may help them see the good in the world.

The Experiment

There are many ways to perform behavioral experiments. Some people may conduct a survey to gather proof of what others believe. Some may want to confront their fears head-on.

No matter which behavioral experiment the person is directing, the client and therapist work together on the exercise by

- recognizing the exact belief, process, or thought the experiment will focus on.
- brainstorming to come up with ideas for the analysis.
- predicting and formulating a method to document the outcome.
- forecasting challenges and brainstorming to generate solutions.
- orchestrating the experiment.
- reviewing and drawing conclusions on the experiment.
- discerning if additional experiments are required to follow up.

The client, along with their therapist, will propose the experiment, and then conduct it and monitor the results closely. Then they discuss the results and how they impact the client's beliefs.

The therapist may recommend further analysis or experiments to form a stricter assessment of the client's unhealthy beliefs.

Examples of Experiments

Psychotherapists can help individuals formulate a behavioral experiment that can neutralize most skewed thoughts. Some examples of these behavioral experiments are below:

- A woman feels tired at bedtime so she stays on social media and watches videos until she falls asleep. Her behavioral experiment requires her to stop taking her phone or other electronics into her room at night and see if she feels more restful reading a book before bedtime instead.
- A man suffering from depression stays in his bed on days when he is particularly down. He spends the day on his phone or watching television and leaves his bedroom only to get food. The behavioral experiment requires him to get out of bed and go to work, spend the day with friends, or be productive.
- A woman feels her life is inadequate because she sees social media posts of her friends seemingly living exciting and perfect lives. She checks what her friends post every day. Her behavioral experiment requires her to stay off social media for an entire week to see if she feels less envious of the lives others lead.
- A man worries that people only like him because of what he can offer them. He is afraid to say “no” to anything people ask of him, even when he doesn’t have the time. His behavioral experiment requires him to say “no” when someone asks him to do them a favor and see how they respond.
- A woman believes her friends only hang out with her because she likes to treat them to coffee, dinner, and other social outings. She doesn’t say “no” because she is worried they won’t hang out with her anymore. Her behavioral experiment requires her not to pay for the tab next time she is out with her friends and see how they react.

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Chapter 7

Build Emotional Intelligence

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Emotional intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to use, perceive, manage, and understand your emotions. When you possess these abilities, you are more likely to benefit from academic achievement, solid decision-making, and personal and professional success. It can be argued that emotional intelligence is more likely to benefit your life than a high intelligence quotient (IQ).

What exactly is emotional intelligence? It is the capacity to perceive, interpret, control, demonstrate, and to use emotions when communicating in a constructive and effective way with others.

What Is Required for Emotional Intelligence?

How can we become emotionally intelligent? Psychologist Brandon Goleman, who made the concept popular in his book *Emotional Intelligence*, suggests five components of emotional intelligence. They are as follows (Goleman, 2005):

- **Self-awareness:** The capability to acknowledge and understand one's emotions is a highly important skill when reaching emotional intelligence. Along with recognizing one's emotions is the ability to know the effect your moods, emotions, and actions have on others.

  Monitoring your emotions is key to becoming self-aware, including observing your own emotional reactions and identifying each of them. Someone who is self-aware is able to recognize the connection between their feelings and how they behave. They also know their own limitations and their strengths and readily invite new experiences, learning from their exchanges with other people.

  Dr. Goleman states that those who are self-aware are confident and are at ease with others, displaying social awareness and identifying social cues. Those who are self-aware are under no delusions as to how others perceive them.

  Here are some ways to improve upon your own self-awareness:

  - meditate

- write down your thoughts and interactions
- invite constructive feedback
- try new things
- set goals
- be aware of your emotions and thoughts behind them
- be mindful
- engage in positive self-talk
- look back on personal experiences
- allow your mindset to grow

- **Social skills:** Interacting with others in social and work situations is vital to having healthy emotional intelligence. Strong social skills help build significant relationships and develop greater potential to understand ourselves and others.

  Understanding your emotions and those of others is a part of social skills, but you also need to utilize this information when you interact with others to communicate appropriately.

  In a work setting, for example, if you can connect with coworkers or your employees effectively, you will create a more successful work environment. Some important social skills include

  - nonverbal communication skills
  - verbal communication skills
  - active listening
  - persuasiveness
  - leadership

  If you can build a strong relationship with people you associate with in your work life and social life, you are more likely to build stronger bonds and be able to move forward with a relationship that creates efficiency.

You can improve your social skills by

- asking open-ended questions
- being aware of others' social skills
- practicing comfortable eye contact
- using commonalities or ice breakers to begin conversations
- showing you are interested in what others say or do
- practicing active listening skills
- being aware of your body language
- working on your social skills

- **Self-regulation:** It is important to be aware of our emotions and how they affect others; it is equally important to regulate our emotions and manage how we present them to others. By no means should you hold in your feelings and lock them deep inside, but it does refer to waiting for the opportune moment to express them. Self-regulation is an important tool for communicating your feelings appropriately.

  When someone is able to self-regulate, they adapt better to challenging circumstances and change without issue. They also tend to be more considerate of how they might impact others and be willing to take control of their own actions and hold themselves accountable for how they behave.

  You can become adept at self-regulation by practicing the following:

  - being aware of your feelings and thoughts
  - managing challenging emotions
  - considering obstacles as opportunities
  - working on communication skills
  - having efficient communication skills
  - improving distress tolerance

- accepting your feelings
- recognizing that you choose to respond the way you do
- applying cognitive reframing to disrupt emotional responses and thought patterns

- **Motivation:** Intrinsic motivation offers a reward for our actions that are motivated by the satisfaction within. Those who have emotional intelligence are driven by the reward of inner satisfaction rather than external rewards such as money, fame, or recognition.

  These people have a desire and drive to achieve their goals because of the rush they get or the feeling of the experience. They tend to be driven, take initiative, and set high standards for themselves when determining what they are able to achieve.

  Ways to improve your motivation include

  - acknowledging your results
  - pushing yourself to stay interested
  - aiming to achieve small, clear, and measurable goals
  - not using extrinsic rewards
  - setting attainable goals and building intrinsic motivation

- **Empathy:** The ability to share feelings with and understand other people—empathy—is essential to emotional intelligence. Empathy is more than recognizing the emotions of others, however. It involves how you respond to people based on the information you have.

  How do you respond to someone who is feeling anxious or worried? Someone with empathy would try to calm them down and let them know that everything will be okay.

  Empathy equips you to better understand the dynamics that impact social relationships, particularly in the workplace. They help guide your exchanges with those you face every day. When someone is able

to sense who holds the power in various dynamics, they can decipher various situations that depend on these power dynamics.

Build empathy by

- listening to others
- engaging in conversation with new people
- putting yourself in someone else's shoes
- doing community service or helping with a community event
- expressing and sharing your feelings
- practicing meditation

The Importance of Emotional Intelligence Skills

Having strong emotional intelligence skills can positively impact a person's life. Those who possess this skill tend to remain level-headed in difficult situations, handle uncomfortable situations well, and make others feel more comfortable.

Benefits of strong emotional skills include the following:

- **Leadership:** Emotional intelligence creates a more constructive and persuasive leader.
- **Self-knowledge:** When you are aware of your feelings, it allows you to understand yourself on a deeper level.
- **Self-control:** When you are in control of your emotions, you are able to develop skills that allow you to control your reactions to those emotions.
- **Communication:** Learn to understand others and how they are feeling. This will enable you to communicate with them more effectively.
- **Stress management:** When you are able to control your emotions, you have more control during circumstances that are stressful or filled

with conflict.

Emotional intelligence allows you to feel more empathy for those around you which allows you to better develop and maintain interpersonal relationships. Creating stronger bonds with people creates a support network in your life that is essential for mental and emotional wellness.

Activities to Build Emotional Intelligence

You know what it takes to foster emotional intelligence, so now we're going to look into activities that can help build emotional intelligence.

Actively Listen

Nonverbal communication can be just an important method of conveying our emotions as verbalizing them, therefore, we must watch for both positive and negative reactions to what we are conveying.

We have all experienced the feeling that someone is hearing words come out of our mouths but not actually understanding what we are saying. When you demonstrate that you are listening to what someone has to say, it will build a deeper connection, and respect, and lay the foundation for a meaningful relationship. To be a good active listener, ask questions, repeat key points, or nod on occasion to show you are paying attention to the meaning of their words.

Journal

Journaling is a good tool for keeping in touch with your emotions and releasing pent-up negativity while strengthening your emotional intelligence. Writing your experiences and the thoughts and emotions you feel because of them is a productive and effective way to sift through issues as you go through your days. Journaling helps you to solve problems, gain more clarity on situations, and manage stress.

Effectively Communicate

Not only is clear communication a critical skill for emotional intelligence. Knowing what and how to say something and when to present the information are all equally important. A team leader must be clear when

communicating what they expect of the team and keep everyone up to speed on the goals. Be honest and concise in your communication, don't mince words, and provide an open mind for others to communicate their feelings to you.

Acknowledge the Feelings of Others

Being in tune with yourself and expressing your thoughts and feelings is important, but so is being aware of how others perceive the way you behave and how you communicate. You may be a direct person, but if you are blunt to a fault, you may be perceived by some as abrasive. If you are unsure of how others regard you, it's okay to ask; in fact, it will show them that you value their feelings.

Stay Positive

Maintaining a positive and calm disposition, even when things are hectic, will help those around you. Staying positive in difficult situations can be a lifeline to others that may be feeling stressed. We all indulge in negative feelings occasionally, but when we have a proactive approach, we have more power to turn a bad situation around and advocate for an adequate solution.

Activities you can do to maintain a positive state of mind include the following:

- listening to music that makes you happy
- practicing a form of art such as dancing, painting, or playing guitar
- doing deep breathing exercises in chaotic situations

Maintain an Open Mind

Emotionally intelligent individuals are more approachable because they consider situations from the perspective of others. These people are also open to trying new ideas and implementing strategies that are outside the box. Instead of dismissing a new concept immediately, consider what it might look like if you incorporate it into your own life or work.

Some ways to implement an open mind are below:

- Confirmation bias is one of the cognitive reasons for many to be closed-minded. This is the tendency to look for, interpret, support, and then recall data in ways that support or confirm your beliefs. A step to defeating this bias is to acknowledge it and then take a moment to digest new information and evaluate it based on research and facts, rather than agreeing because it supports your beliefs.
- To have confidence in your intellect and in your choices is commendable, but resolution in only your own ideals can be a sign of closed-minded thinking. Being open-minded requires you to question others, as well as yourself. As new information is learned, ask yourself if the source of the information is trustworthy. Have you considered other possibilities? Do you know a lot about this topic? Are you biased to the outcome of your thinking on this matter?
- Consider information and how you can approach it open-mindedly, rather than reacting immediately. This requires more self-control and takes more effort, but it will offer an insight into other people's thinking and help you gain perspective on different views.
- Research has shown that being knowledgeable or expert on a topic can make people closed-minded. The brain is imperfect and is continually learning, while technology, nutrition, medicine, and most other concepts and things on Earth are ever-changing, so no one truly knows it all. Believing you know everything about a topic can lead to ignorance or overestimation of your knowledge because your limits are not being acknowledged. Take a moment to hear other points of view and additional information that you may not be aware of, allowing everyone to learn something new and communicate in a cohesive way.

Empathize

Try to maintain an open mind when dealing with others. You may not consider something they are going through to be particularly difficult, but all emotions are subjective. Whether you feel the same way or not, try to

see situations from the other person's perspective and acknowledge how it feels to be in their shoes.

Respond to Constructive Criticism With Self-Reflection

Have you ever heard the expression, "Step outside of yourself"? The ability to take constructive criticism is the ability to hear what others have to say about your performance, how you handle a situation, and what you can do to react or convey things differently. Whether it's how you respond to feedback on your performance at work or the reaction when a friend confides in you, it's worth hearing what someone has to say from their perspective. Listening to what someone else has to say will allow you to acknowledge your faults and take responsibility for your decision.

Building Emotional Intelligence

You have learned the activities that can help you build emotional intelligence. Now, it's up to you to follow through on these steps.

- Empathize: What have you done to show your inner child or others empathy?

- Identify: What negative thoughts, expressions, or emotions are holding you back? How are you going to keep them under control?

- Evaluate: What actions, relationships, and behaviors need to be rectified? What will your first step be
- Express: How do you feel and why? What are you going to do to resolve any negative feelings?

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Chapter 8

Learning From Your Past

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Once you have met your inner child, heard what they had to say, and let them know you will protect them, you need to make sure you can fulfill that promise. How can you put the lessons you have learned to good use? How can you build a better life where their growth is encouraged?

Having a traumatic childhood can cause post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and can make seemingly simple tasks or situations terrifying. To protect your inner child, you need to find a way to set those boundaries and stick to them for stability.

For example, when someone gives you constructive criticism on your cooking, focus on the positives they offer and not just the negatives. When you give constructive feedback, compliment one or two things you like about their story, cooking, or clothing before offering criticism. Hearing the positive makes hearing what you need to work on easier.

A Guide to Setting Boundaries

Setting boundaries is vital for people who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), but it can be difficult to do. Many who live with PTSD also bear feelings of shame, guilt, and unworthiness, making it difficult for them to set boundaries to protect themselves. When others do not respect their boundaries, it can cause further stress.

We cannot expect everyone to know immediately what our boundaries are, since we do not wear them expressly on our person. It can be awkward and challenging to set boundaries and even more so to communicate them to others, but this is also an essential step toward promoting your mental health and well-being.

When you set boundaries, you are setting up an invisible shield meant to protect your emotional, physical, and mental health. We often set boundaries for

- emotions
- thoughts

- personal space
- time
- possessions
- sexuality
- ethics
- culture
- religion

Everyone should set the five main boundaries below within their personal and professional lives:

- **Physical:** This refers to your personal space and how comfortable you are with someone touching you or even being close to you. Someone in your life may be very comfortable sharing shows of affection in public, but you may find even hand-holding awkward. This also means you need to be respectful of others' preferences.
- **Intellectual:** These boundaries are the beliefs, concerns, and thoughts that you have. When someone does not regard these beliefs, they are being disrespectful.
- **Sexual:** This refers to what you feel is appropriate or what you are comfortable with in intimate situations. You are allowed to express yourself if you find a form of touch or expression uncomfortable.
- **Emotional:** This refers to what you are comfortable sharing with others, whether it is your feelings or your past. You are in charge of determining how much or how soon you divulge.
- **Financial:** This boundary is all about money and how comfortable you are sharing your finances. You may want to avoid going on vacation with someone who spends money freely when you are on a budget. You may want to speak about how much money you have to someone you know is on a tight budget.

Everyone should feel they deserve to set boundaries that others need to abide by. Boundaries help build healthy relationships because they set rules for negotiating professional or personal relationships. The challenge can be to know where to begin putting up those dividers between what you will accept and what you will not tolerate. Boundaries can also help nurture

- independence
- emotional strength
- self-esteem

Setting boundaries may sound like you are setting up a wall around yourself and not letting anyone in, but the truth is that boundaries, such as the below, set a parameter to respect and acknowledge one another's feelings:

- **Improve self-esteem:** When you set a boundary, you are protecting yourself from having relationships become precarious. The limits placed on ourselves and others help our relationships maintain a closeness while allowing you to put precedence on your own health, whether within your career, personal relationships, or your own self-care.

  By establishing personal boundaries, you are demonstrating how you have become more responsible for your life. You are in control of how you will be treated by others and will react in a way that reinforces your boundaries. The more you demand respect and consideration from others, the more you will begin to see yourself as being worth it.

- **Preserve emotional energy:** When you are unable to advocate for yourself, your self-esteem can be affected and you may begin to resent those around you. There is no rule that you need to set the same boundaries for everyone in your life. Navigate the settings of your boundaries depending on the situation or the people or person that you associate with.

  If your mental wellness is suffering because you are bearing the emotional brunt of a friend's personal drama, you need to alleviate

yourself of that negative energy. This doesn't mean that you are not able to help that same friend out when they need help moving homes.

- **Allow for flexibility:** You may find that at the beginning of your healing journey or at various times in your life, you need to set stricter boundaries than at other times. Don't feel that once a limit is set, you are unable to loosen it. Being too strict on boundaries may cause you to become isolated, or it may cause you to abandon them altogether.
- **Allow room to grow and the opportunity to be vulnerable:** Life is complicated, as are feelings at various stages and during certain events in our lives. Setting boundaries that you will release at the right time is revealing your vulnerability.

  A display of vulnerability can be speaking about a difficult time in your life to your friends. Showing that you trust someone enough to open up about your feelings will show them that they can feel comfortable opening up to you, should the need arise.

  There is a difference between sharing too much and being vulnerable. When we are vulnerable, we allow ourselves the opportunity to create a common bond with someone, but when you overshare, you risk dramatizing a situation or using it to manipulate the relationship to go in a certain direction.

  Ways you may be sharing too much are below:

  - You release your issues onto anyone who will listen.
  - You are the only one speaking in the conversation.
  - You air your drama or anger on social media.
  - You expect people to be a part of your drama at a whim.
  - You share too much information with a new associate or friend.

Setting boundaries on communication is important for yourself as well as others. When you share too much information, you may push someone out of their comfort zone and create unnecessary distance in your relationship rather than bring you closer together.

Setting and Maintaining Healthy Boundaries

Setting new boundaries does not mean you have to abandon your existing ones. You may need to revisit boundaries at a later date as circumstances change and you grow, but that is up to you to do on your terms in alignment with what makes you comfortable. Some simple ways to begin include:

- **Take time for self-reflection:** Introducing boundaries isn't as simple as spewing off some nos and don'ts. It is important to understand and acknowledge why you are setting each boundary and how it will benefit you emotionally. Discover what makes you uncomfortable by diving into your own psychological needs. You don't need to set them all at once either, but gradually implement what works best for you and helps to protect the safety of your inner child.
- **Take small steps:** Set your boundaries gradually rather than all at once. You may not realize what you need to limit until a situation occurs, so don't feel that you need to decide all at once. Setting a few limits at a time can be impactful and allow you to reflect on your decisions and determine if you are heading in the direction that works for you.
- **Set boundaries early in a relationship:** Setting boundaries once you are already in a relationship can be challenging. Set boundaries at the beginning and there will be less chance of confusion, frustrations, or hurt feelings.
- **Be consistent:** Once you loosen your boundaries, either because someone guilts you into it or because it's easier for you, you are opening the door to others demanding more of you. Keep things consistent and the line between what you will accept and not accept remains drawn.
- **Add boundaries to existing ones:** In many situations, boundaries are already set, such as at a workplace, but this doesn't mean additional ones cannot be added to make you feel more comfortable. There may be a no dating policy between coworkers, but you can take this a step

further and decline any invitations to outings that do not pertain to the workplace. Some people prefer to keep their work life completely separate from their personal life.

- **Communicate clearly and effectively:** If someone is constantly ignoring your boundaries, you need to clarify them. This may be uncomfortable, but it doesn't need to be confrontational. If you have a sibling or friend who expects you to babysit regularly, there is nothing wrong with telling them you have plans but would babysit another time you are free.
- **Monitor social media posts:** It is easy to be a keyboard warrior or express your problems on social media because it allows a sense of anonymity. It can also be tempting to chime in when others share their personal stories, but you may find this opens up the door for others to pry into your life and push your boundaries more than you are comfortable with. If you do not feel good about telling a stranger about your issues in person, it's likely not a good idea to post them on a social platform for all to see.
- **Advocate for yourself:** When setting boundaries, be an advocate for what you deserve. If you think little of yourself, you are likely to be wary of demanding a certain level of respect or privacy, for example. Set a dialogue in your head saying you are good enough for the respect you demand from others. It is not greedy of you to ask others to respect your privacy or not ask about certain aspects of your life. Doing something that will make you feel good and get serotonin levels rising will help boost your confidence and expect the respect you give to others.

Recognize That Other People Have Boundaries

As crucial as your boundaries are to you, there needs to be mutual respect for the limits set by other people about what they believe is best for them, even if they don't advocate for yours.

Recognizing the boundaries of someone close to you may be easy, such as a spouse, sibling, or child. If your loved one doesn't post pictures of themselves online, chances are you shouldn't either.

If you are unsure of someone's boundaries, ask them questions like the following:

- Do you mind if I post that photo of us?
- What time can I call you?
- Are you okay if I talk to you about…?

Boundaries are critical for your emotional well-being and that of your inner child. When you are protecting yourself, you are also protecting them. These lines look different to everyone. Just as you wouldn't be comfortable with someone pushing your limits, you should respect others.

Limits are a healthy way to ensure you are not put into an awkward situation and are surrounding yourself with positive and uplifting scenarios and people. Nothing is ironclad, but changing your boundaries too frequently can result in none.

Knowing When Boundaries Need to Be Set

Being able to separate your feelings from another person's is what is meant by keeping boundaries. People have their own memories, thoughts, and experiences that can be overshared and blurred with another person's own life. Implementing boundaries helps keep that space healthy and just for you.

It is fairly easy to determine when your physical limits are infringed upon, but psychological and emotional boundaries are more difficult to determine when a line is crossed. You are going to have to trust your own feelings and intuition when it comes to where the line is drawn for those boundaries.

Recovering From Abandonment Issues

Those who suffer from abandonment issues are afraid of being left behind or abandoned by those they love. People are usually not preoccupied with the thought of their friends and family leaving them, but someone who has experienced this in the past, particularly in childhood, is more susceptible to these types of concerns.

You know that many things can cause abandonment issues and what that looks like, but it's time to heal from your traumatic past and begin a better future alongside your newest friend: your inner child.

Examples of how someone with abandonment issues might act are below:

- They are clingy in a relationship.
- They are overly eager to please everyone.
- They have difficulty trusting anyone.

Some ways for you to acknowledge your abandonment issues while preventing them from controlling your outlook on your life and disposition include the following:

- **Express your emotions:** Your inner child's voice needs to be heard now. Talk openly in therapy, to a friend, or even to those who hurt or abandoned you if they will listen.

  When you express your emotions, they are easier to process and move past. Once you have voiced what you must, you can close the door on that part of your life and move forward.

- **Recognize irrational fears:** The fear of losing those close to you is something you are allowing to come between you and healthy relationships. Recognizing that you are not going to lose your loved ones will help you to catch these irrational thoughts and stop them from spiraling into a stream of relentless contemplation.

- **Repair internalized shame:** When a child does not receive adequate love growing up, they experience internalized shame, which represents feelings of self-hatred, self-loathing, and self-disgust.

These are intense feelings and thoughts of there being something wrong within.

Internalized shame can present in various forms or negative self-talk, such as

- feeling you can’t do anything right
- hating yourself
- repeatedly apologizing
- feeling you are a burden
- feeling guilty
- self-harming (drinking excessively, reckless driving, cutting)
- being critical of how you look
- feeling self-hatred or disgust
- feeling unworthy of love
- consistently feeling of embarrassed for yourself
- thinking about death

These feelings, in addition to feelings of inadequacy, seep into your core and construct your identity, denying you the experience of exploring life fully. Healing the shame you feel requires you to work on your inner core and find yourself.

You need to reinvent yourself, so to speak, and realize that you are whole and loved. You are not the shell of a child the adults in your life made you believe you were. You need to remind yourself of all you have and reset confidence within your core.

Build a Better Support Network

For any recovery, whether emotional, mental, or physical, a good support system is essential. Having a strong support network includes friends and

family, but the roots of ensuring your mental health are optimal. You need a network that allows you to cover all aspects of your recovery journey.

Some people may struggle to build a support network, especially if they are new to an area, have few family and friends, or are reserved in what they share.

Recovery is an intimate and personal journey of empowerment and discovery, and your hopes and goals differ from everyone else. Many factors will contribute to how you overcome your painful past and reacquaint yourself with the world as a newly healed individual, but you may not want to try it alone.

A support system, built with people you trust, is going to help you through the times that see you relapsing on your journey. Family, friends, members of your faith, neighbors, coworkers, and support groups may help in different ways to help you build a stronger sense of self.

A support network can promote a stronger sense of security and have a positive influence on your mental health overall. If you are battling your past or trying to move onward with a new outlook, it will not do you any good to dwell.

Setting Boundaries Worksheet

Setting boundaries is top priority in your relationships to maintain a healthy balance of respect on both sides. Understanding which boundaries you have particular trouble with and working on more strictly reinforcing them is key to healthy relationships.

1. Which boundaries do you find most difficult to uphold?

2. Do you find it challenging to set boundaries with specific people? Who are they?

3. What do you find most angering or frustrating about this person or persons?

4. Why do you find it so challenging to set boundaries with them?

5. What can be the first boundary to set with them?

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Chapter 9

Self-Care for the Inner Child

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On this path to self-discovery, you have found and healed your inner child. There may still be times when you need to remind your younger self that things are going to be okay, but there are brighter days ahead, full of laughter and a new beginning.

It is always okay—and necessary—to keep your inner child alive and to acknowledge what they have gone through to bring you to the place you are now. But with the recognition of the pain, you need to celebrate the light moments you experienced in your childhood as well.

Keeping your inner child close to you is a way to appreciate the steps you've taken to bring you into adulthood. You are both responsible for the person you are today, and without one, there would not be the other. It is the most important connection you can have with anyone.

Maintaining a happy relationship with your inner child is ongoing. Celebrating the fun moments in life are what will allow you to maintain a strong mindset moving forward. Below are some tips to maintain a healthy relationship with your younger self and create a healthier outlook on life:

- **Be proud of your accomplishments:** Once you have completed a task, let yourself know you've done a good job. Acknowledge when you have made a good effort, even if not everything turned out perfectly. Your inner child needs to hear that they have done well and that today was a good day. Positive reinforcement encourages people to do well and to try again in the face of adversity. If you were too afraid, let your inner child know that they were brave for trying and that you will work with them tomorrow to get it done.
- **Let yourself know you are loved by yourself:** Love is a universal need, especially self-love. It feels amazing to know that someone loves you, but there is no greater satisfaction than feeling love within yourself. Even if you don't feel you deserve love, say it over to yourself until you believe it. You will be more open to the love of others once you accept your own.
- **Appreciate yourself:** Once you learn to appreciate yourself and acknowledge the work you have done to heal your mental state,

provide food for yourself and your family, and work at the job you do, you will be more open to accepting the appreciation of others. If you don't see the value in yourself, chances are, you won't expect others to appreciate you either.

- **Acknowledge your worth:** You are an important part of the lives of many for what you do and for the bravery you have shown in carrying on in the face of adversity. Remind yourself you are worth all the kindness that comes your way.

Daily Affirmations for Your Inner Child

You have done the work to let your inner child know they are safe, protected, loved, whole, and wanted, and you have let them know you will not abandon or neglect them. You will need to continue to let them know that they are going to be seen and heard by you. These daily affirmations can help:

- "The pain of my childhood was real."
- "My feelings are valid."
- "I am worthy of love."
- "My younger self was not at fault."
- "Reparenting myself is helpful."
- "I deserve love."
- "It's okay to show emotions."
- "I am safe."
- "The voice of my inner child is valid."
- "I deserve respect."
- "I am worthy of my love and the love of others."
- "My self-worth is strong."
- "Expressing joy is the greatest gift to my inner child."

- “My inner child is free to laugh.”
- “I love my inner child.”
- “I am proud of who I was and who I am.”
- “My inner child is happy.”
- “I will no longer carry shame.”
- “Today I will embrace only positive actions.”
- “I trust myself.”
- “I love who I have become.”
- “I am whole.
- “The past should not be dwelled upon.”
- “I will live each day in the present.”
- “I am unstoppable.”

Reinforce Boundaries

Boundaries will help you feel secure and give you a feeling of mutual respect in a relationship. Setting limits on what makes you feel comfortable should not be taken as a sign of aggression or demand, but rather something that allows all involved to move forward with a mutual understanding of how the other person feels and what they will tolerate. You may not want to discuss certain topics or people with others, but that doesn’t mean you can’t find other commonalities. Setting boundaries within a relationship will offer a sense of respect and safety for you and those you choose to or need to spend time with.

Here are some ways to reinforce boundaries:

- **Say “no”:** It’s more than okay to tell someone you don’t want to do something for them or with them. Prioritizing your mental health and well-being will not ruin a relationship that is worth having. It will, however, help you feel happier and give you a sense of self-worth.

You should not feel you need to do everything others ask of you to maintain a relationship with them. If this is the case, those in question need to be reevaluated, not you.

- **Set limits:** Allow yourself to ask for what you need physically, mentally, and emotionally so that you can set limits and communicate more effectively with others. You will not be able to effectively set limits for others if you don't completely understand them yourself. Draw a boundary for what you are willing to do, discuss and accept in general, and enforce that limit for yourself and others.
- **Be direct:** Set your boundaries clearly and concisely. Just because you are certain of your boundaries, does not mean you have to say so in an abrasive manner, nor should you feel guilty for expressing those boundaries. Let your friend, family member, coworker, partner, children, and others that are a part of your life know about your boundaries and then stick to them. If you let people slide the scale of your comfort level toward their needs or wants, your limits will always be challenged. Be stern.

  Establishing these boundaries and reinforcing them will let others know what you expect from them and what they can expect from you in return. Reinforcing boundaries will ensure

  - there is no oversharing of personal information.
  - that you are aware of what you need and how to communicate it.
  - you value your own opinions
  - you will respect others when they set limits or say "no."

Setting and maintaining personal and professional boundaries is important, but the same rules don't need to apply to everyone in your life. You may set different boundaries for coworkers than you do for a spouse.

Teachings From Your Inner Child

Children are born helpless, completely reliant on those who chose to bring them into the world. There is an inherent trust from a child that they will be taken care of and made to feel whole, loved, and safe. When parents fail to provide these essential components of life, it results in a wounded inner child who grows to be a traumatized adult who struggles to perform to their potential in life.

Healing your inner child is going to help you move forward with a greater sense of who you are and who your younger self should have been. Through reparenting your wounded inner child, you will hopefully come to repair some of the habits you have attained due to feeling inadequate and neglected.

Below are some ways to acknowledge and repair the signs that suggest you may be harboring a wounded inner child and turn them around:

- You no longer feel inadequate; you know you are enough.
- Pleasing people all the time isn't possible or necessary.
- You once felt you needed conflict to feel alive, but you now know that harmony is a more productive and validating trait.
- Once a hoarder afraid of letting go of the past, you now know possessions do not replace emotions.
- Before, you struggled to keep relationships that were failing, but you now acknowledge that it's better to let some things go.
- You may still feel anxiety with new situations or people; however, you now acknowledge those feelings and go into a new situation with a positive attitude.
- You no longer feel guilt for setting boundaries; you now know that you deserve to protect yourself.
- No longer an overachiever, you now do what you can and make attainable and clear goals for yourself to complete in steps.
- Once a perfectionist, you know mistakes are to be learned from and incorporated into our life experiences.

- You had difficulty beginning and completing tasks, but now you set goals to complete them each day and follow through.
- Once, you were self-critical, but you now accept your flaws and move onward to be a better person.
- You used to avoid conflict, but you now stand up for yourself in a calm manner and don't back down.
- You had a fear of abandonment, but you have recognized this is an irrational fear and know that you are loved.
- Before, you were ashamed to express your feelings. You now know your feelings are valid and you should embrace them in appropriate settings and acknowledge them without pushing them down inside.
- You no longer body shame; you acknowledge that what makes you unique is beautiful.
- You distrusted everyone, but you now know not everyone is going to let you down.

Your inner child was compelling in shaping your emotions, beliefs, fears, emotions, and general conditioned thinking into your adult years. You cannot go back and rewrite your childhood, but you can move forward with a new respect for the bravery and strength of your inner child and honor them by rising above the wounds that you suffered and making you and your younger self whole.

Repairing your mental health and maintaining it will allow you to have more positive experiences with your attachment to others and within yourself. You need to feel heard and know that someone understands you so that you find a more positive way to evaluate the history and progression of your life story. Nurturing your inner child and finding a positive outlook on your own life and how to negotiate relationships will help you move beyond the struggle you once felt.

Using calming techniques, confronting the way you see others, recognizing daily triggers, reclaiming your past, journaling, and other tools you have learned will allow you to compartmentalize your life into the two parts you

now know: wounded inner child and strong adult. Your goal should be to acknowledge your inner child with compassion and move onward with the strength you have wielded throughout your life.

Acknowledge the sacrifices your inner child has made in exchange for simply getting by. They have taken responsibility for things they should not have, withheld feelings they should have been encouraged to share, and imagined trust rather than experiencing it. Now is the time to thank your inner child for their sacrifices, let them know you will always be there for them, and walk toward a more positive and well-deserved future for your adult self.

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Conclusion

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Your wounded inner child does not have to continue causing you pain. Even though the same body connects you, time distances you, and in that time, you have grown, healed, and conquered life without the proper send-off. You are someone to be proud of.

Utilizing new tools to help you grow from your past and create a more powerful sense of yourself will allow you to move beyond the pain, neglect, or loneliness you felt growing up. You can hold onto the lessons you have learned without allowing the pain of the past to linger.

The first step toward acknowledging your inner child and allowing them to speak is the initiation toward a better understanding of why you are the person you've become and how you can manifest a more complete sense of self. You are not expected to forget the pain you came from, but rather learn to move on without keeping it close to your chest and feeding off that pain and anger when new situations or relationships arise.

Stepping into your inner child and playing games you used to love, running barefoot on the grass, puddle jumping, or doing whatever your younger self loved, is good for the soul and keeps you young. Along with the nostalgia comes the need to reach your inner child's heart and let them know you've always got them.

Without repressing your memories of a difficult past, but mending your wounded inner child, you are creating a whole version of yourself, warts and all, to be loved and who is worthy of celebrating. Nurture your inner child, and remember that you are reparenting them not to dwell on the past, but to feel safe and confident moving forward.

You were strong enough to make it through your childhood with a good heart and determination to become whole; that's why you read this book. Go toward the future knowing you are good enough, you are strong enough, and you are worthy of the space you fill on this Earth with your unique perspective.

There is no portal in time that closes the opportunity for you to heal your past. Nurturing your inner child, acknowledging them, and validating their

needs, will allow you to learn to express your emotions in a productive and healthy way while simultaneously learning to love the unique gift that you are.

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